

# Strength Based Strategies 2006



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# Strength Based Strategies

*Resilience as opposed to deficits: working with strengths*

**Editors:**

**Venkat Pulla & Christopher Montgomery**

***A Compendium of Papers presented at the Inaugural Global Conference on  
Strength based Strategies 2006***



Strength Based Strategies  
***Resilience as opposed to deficits: working with strengths***

*Editors:*

Venkat Pulla & Christopher Montgomery

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The artwork on the front cover is based on an original drawing by Australian Aboriginal educator, Duncan Williams. The drawing describes the interconnectedness of all things; the sun gives life, wind (diagonal lines), and rain (dots), provide the air we breathe, and the water that is so necessary in an often parched land. The hand denotes the human interconnectedness with the environment and other human beings that is the mainstay of healthy community. The grass and turtles denote the flora and fauna that make up the world inhabitants. The painting was originally drawn by Duncan Williams as a gift for his mother. They have graciously donated its use for this conference related publications

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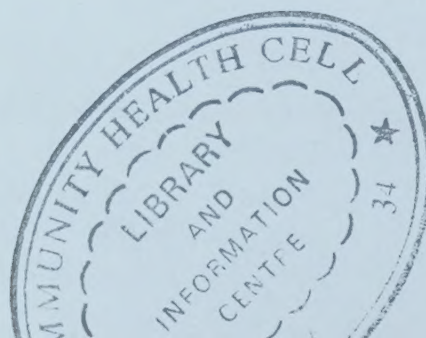
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## Foreword

Papers included in this compendium are those presented at the Strength based Strategies 2006 Conference held in Hyderabad. People identified this conference as an Australian initiated International Conference, held here in this historic city of Hyderabad.

Event of this nature requires a couple of years lead time and great committees and a perhaps number of fund raising and event managers. We had none. Yet the initiator challenged all assumptions and conventions with one single phrase: 'power within'. That struck chords. Brought new found alliances and through these process, a whole new community was born right across the globe. A new critical mass of caring and reflecting people and a brand new practice in action picked up the momentum.

The Brisbane Institute, Australia and Sanghamitra in India shared one thing in common, throughout: Lack of financial resources. The Brisbane Institute will have its first birthday in July 2007, it just started with 9 of us out of which 8 are present here physically in this Conference and the one left behind, is also very much in spirit with us. Throughout, in abundance was this new found belief in strength based strategies to build hope. Enthusiasm, extra ordinary drive, collective and consultative leadership, hard work did it. We are very aware that this conference is a modest and a humble beginning of what both organisations that bonded together have to offer. In three words our shared understanding is Hope, Optimism and Future.

We recognise in our awareness that all of you are part of this and we remain obligated to you and to the divine providence.

Peter Binyon  
Vice President  
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Brig. Shashi Deshpande (Retd)  
President  
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India











# Changing the Face of My Local Community through Waste to Wealth Programme in Lagos State, Nigeria

Taiwo Adegboyega Adewole

My name is Taiwo Adewole. I live in North Africa in Nigeria, in the State of Lagos and I want to talk to you this morning/afternoon about the problems of waste management in my community and how our young people have developed a program for both dealing with the problem and at the same time creating wealth for themselves.

The post independence era in Nigeria has witnessed series of political and socio-economic development. Today the nation comprises 36 states and a federal capital territory compared with initial four regions at independence in 1960. Nigeria has also experienced a continuous increase in population, industrialization and enhanced research and commercial activities since petroleum was discovered, yet this growth has not been comparatively matched by an improvement in the quality of the urban environment.

Instead, we have huge mounds of refuse and astronomical increase in the volume and diversity of solid waste that are generated and disposed any how in Nigeria, these have been unprecedented reports of coastal water, land and air pollution world-wide, but with developing countries like Nigeria thereby creating a serious detrimental effects in many carefree, slow responding developing countries like Nigeria thereby creating a serious disposal problem and a major source of environmental pollution.

In Lagos State, it has been suggested that the quantity of waste generated in the state is in proportion to population size- as population increases so also waste generated also increases.

Most cities in Nigeria (especially Lagos) are faced with the twin problems of population increase and rapid expansion. These phenomena have no doubt, brought increasing strain on urban infrastructural facilities. One area in which this strain has become obvious is in waste management where the existing system appears to be incapable of coping with the mountain load of waste generated and heaped on the surface. It has been noted that over 9 million people live in Lagos State, which is the most densely populated state in Nigeria due to its commercial activities.

Ignorance coupled with poverty may be adduced as the reason for the wasteful habits of must people in Nigeria, especially in the densely populated states. Nigerians are permanently accustomed to dirt. This is truth. Evidence of this can be seen everyday by way of indiscriminate discharge if garbage into drains and at times on the highway. In urban areas, Nigerian cities have been described as some of the dirtiest the most unsanitary and the least aesthetically pleasing in the world (Mabogunje 1996). It beats one hollow to see a man defecating in broad daylight on the side of the high way or a woman with her wrapper pulled up doing her thing on the sidewalk or gutter in full glare of the public. Or where a man parks his/her car and throws waste on the street, then one begins to wonder the reason or reasons for those dirty habits of our people.

Many industries in Nigeria discharge their waste water into surface waters [oceans, seas and streams] more often than not without any form of remediation or treatment. This has several deleterious consequences such as using partially diluted, polluted water for irrigation, reduction in the food quality and quantity of useful and beneficial aquatic flora and fauna, reduction in quality and quantity of harvested agricultural produce as a result of irrigation with unwholesome water consumption of agricultural produce.

The world health organization defines. Health as "the state of complete physical social and mental well-being and not the absence of disease or infirmity". This shows management of solid waste as on integral part of ensuring a sanitary safe and sound environment. Environmental sanitation, under which management falls, is the control of factors in the physical environment, which exercise or may exercise deleterious effects on man's health.

Safe waste disposal and management programmes are relevant to both developed and developing countries. In developed countries the focus is on improving facilities to meet higher environmental quality criteria, while in developing countries considerable investment is required to build new treatment facilities.

It should be noted that two principles of law of thermodynamics inform us that waster is an inevitable bye product of any economic activity, further more, a certain minimum amount of economic activity can be pursed without causing damage to the natural environmental. This is because the natural environment has the capacity, albeit a limited capacity, to degrade waste. For persistent solid waste the assimilative capacity of the environment may be, if not zero, quite insignificant.

Waste regulation activities depend on the culture and technologies advancement of any country throughout the world Nigeria only recognizes waste as a problem and the problems of managing waste in one country eventually overlap into waste management problems in another country.



Because of the inability to sort waste at source, household and industrial waste including toxic ones are often handled together leading to soil and ground water pollution (UNEP 2000).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defined waste as "Something, which the owner no longer wants at a given time and place and which has no current or perceived market value".

One of the few statutes in Nigeria, which attempts to define waste, is the Lagos State Environmental Sanitation Edict 19985, there in section 32, waste is defined as follow." Waste" includes.

(a) Waste of all description

(b) Any substance, which constitutes scrap materials or an effluent or other, unwanted surplus substance arising from the application of any process.

Waste management is the organized and systematic channelling of waster through practically economically and technically appropriate recovery or disposal route in accordance with acceptable public safeguards. Effective and safe waste management programmes, require a total annual investment in developing countries of \$15.7 or \$16 billion, of which \$2.7 or \$3 billion is required exclusively for safe disposal of solid waste- if the international community provides 1/5 of this amount that would be about \$3.5 billion annually of which about \$2 billion relates only to solid waste.

### Stages in Waste Management

The various stages involved in Waste management are:

[1] GENERATION: This is the stage when materials becomes waste and is discarded. The generation rate is often defined as the weight of material discarded as solid waste by one person in one day

[2] STORAGE: House storage, keeping solid waste in place or containers which is the responsibility of the individual members of the household

[] Command storage, is the responsible of the refuse collection agency.

[3] COLLECTION: This has to do with transportation of the solid waste from the point of storage to the point of disposal, two stages are involved in the collection stages; the direct collection, which makes uses only one means of transportation i.e. the Solid waste is picked up from the point of storage in a truck that takes it to the disposal site, **The second stage collection** Carries the solid waste from the storage facility to the Transfer station, at the transfer station, the waste is loaded into the secondary stage, to transport the refuse to the Disposal site.

[4] DISPOSAL: The final destination of solid waste, usually it is dumped on land at a tip, this may be done in an engineered and hygienic Way: - sanitary landfill or controlled tipping, or in a careless Way: - open tipping or crude dumping.

Under managed or crude waste disposal has negative effect on the environment, individual and community health, society in general and the economy. These include:

- Toxic contamination of the environment
- Specific health problems including convulsion, chronic dermatitis, chronic irritation of mucous membranes, cancers and a wide range of other diseases that may be caused by increased populations of flies and rats.
- The creation of socially undesirable land areas that are unsightly and that could be used for other, more beneficial economic activity.

The Lagos State management authority (LAWMA) identified the following waste types as mostly generated and collected in Lagos State.

They include:

- Vegetable matter, putrescibles
- Paper
- Textiles
- Metal
- Plastics
- Glass



- Grits
- Miscellaneous, inert
- Tyres etc.

The end of the 1980S saw a radical reappraisal of our concerns over resource availability and use, the environmental consequences of resources exploitation and the relationship between the environment, poverty and economic change.

This re-appraisal has given rise to a new approach to environment and development issues an approach, which seeks to reconcile human needs and the capacity of the environment to cope with the consequences of economic systems. This approach is called sustainable development. Sustainable development is an implied development without destruction. Sustainable development can also be defined as judicious use of non-renewable resources for the present and future generations. That is, non-renewable resources must be used at a judicious rate, neither too fast nor too slow and to ensure that the natural wealth that they represent is converted into long-term wealth as they are used.

Refuse and domestic waste will not constitute a strange sight to Nigerians whose streets are littered with tons of garbage from animal to human carcass. Lately however, a lot of concern has been expressed by the well-meaning residents that the battle against refuse, especially on the streets, roads, and avenues is not being prosecuted in a way to guarantee a healthy environment.

At present in Lagos state private sector waste disposal operators diligently visits homes and carry away filled refuse bags, load them into waiting trucks and cart them away for final disposal. "That is good", the resident say. They however worry that a lot of littering goes on in the environment and the streets and avenues may have been ignored and left not cleared.

It could also be stated that the major problem caused by (domestic) wastes to the environment is pollution, characterized by various types of solid wastes, which include, "paper, textile, plastic, metals, glass, bone, wood, vegetal matter and food remnants of multiple consistency.

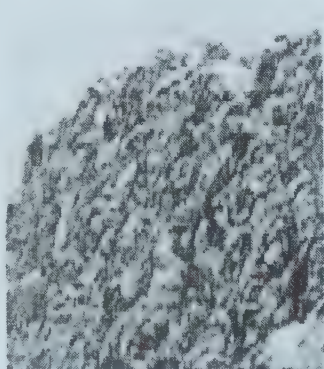
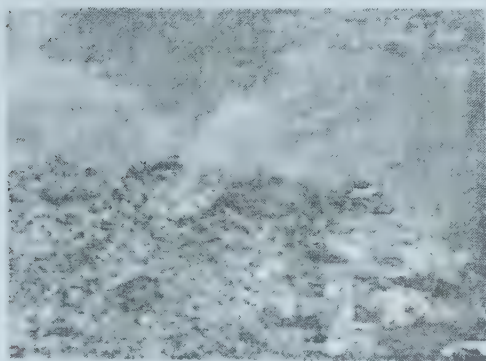
Nigeria urbanization trend has also been spectacular, to say the least. For instance in 1921 there was no city in Nigeria with a population of over 1,000,000, while only 10 towns had population of 20,000 and above each.

In 1931, 24 towns had urban population status (in Nigeria, town with a population of 20,000 and above are regarded as urban), with 2 having up to 100,000 and above population. By 1984 estimates showed that there were 356 towns with population of 20,000 and above. 62 with population of 100,000; 14 with 500,000 and above population respectively (see table below). In fact, by 1984, Lagos had attained a millionaire city status. Conclusively, between 1984 and year 2004 (a spate of 20 years) the population of Lagos state has increased by 19 million people. This explosion in population growth has negatively impacted on the management of solid domestic waste in the state.

In Nigeria there are three factors that mitigate against effective waste management. They are:

1. Attitudes to work
2. Inadequate infrastructure, including outdated and inadequate collection and processing tools and equipment
3. Corruption

Corruption is a canker worm that has eaten deep into every fabric of the Nigerian society. This we may not denied except to our collective demises and peril. The collapse in most of the various agencies in waste management infrastructure in my community may be traced to this menace.



Above are pictures of typical Dumpsite/Landfill in my community





**Above are examples of the type of truck used by private waste managers**

### **Waste to Wealth Programme in my Community**

Now that I have set the scene I want to discuss how the youth in my community have been generating wealth from the waste in my country.

The waste – to – wealth programme has been successfully through the following: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. but the main area of wealth creation is in the area of recycling of polythene, Plastics, Rubber and Scrap metals. These material constitute the greatest problem of waste in my community as they are non-biodegradable. Polythenes are frequently used in Nigeria as packing materials and also in the package of water popularly known as “pure water”.

The youth in my community have been working hand-in-hard to tackle the issue of polythene recycling. An association of the “Pure water manufacturer” has been set up, the youth go out on daily basis to collect used polythene bag and exchange this for cash, the manufacturer in turn reuse the polythene through recycling. In this case these youth cash in on the garbage and use what other people consider non-resources and throw away to make there own resources.

Not many people in Lagos State know that daily they squander away up opportunities to make residual income. Without disturbing their legitimate and major source of income. Locally we have not fully embraced the technology of turning waste- to – wealth; there are get few factories scattered here and there that are using these waste materials at the moment.

Polythene, plastic and rubber, waste materials are among so may other types found littered on our street and crannies of our community as stated in my earlier introduction. In most cases people economic value.

There is an urgent need for a thriving recycling industry comprising more than 1000 small, medium and large business, such as hawkers, brokers, processors, recyclers, suppliers of waste reduction equipment's, customized, collection system designers, wholesales pick up services, confidential document, shredders, waste audit consultants, energy.

All the listed above industries are present in the developed nation but in the case of Nigeria Lagos State to be precise, what we have the small and medium business whom include hawkers otherwise know as scavenger, recyclers, confidential document shredders (usually done in most offices), we also have small numbers of waste audit consultants, drum re-conditioners (convention of drums and scrap metals).

I believe with what some of the youth are presently doing in Lagos state, recycling in manufacturing activities like plastics compounding, paper, mounded paper, recycling of rubber and plastic cuts from glass wastes, scrap metal smelting and so on will definitely open up vast frontier in recycling business and making it highly beneficial to man and nature in Lagos and Nigeria as a whole beside the great potential of generating employment and income.

### **Approaches to waste- to- wealth programme in my Community**

Solutions to waste management problem can be found using different approaches and methods. The approaches being used presently in my community to the design and implementation of waste management systems is based upon two important observations.

(1) People are the heart of the waste management problem, people generate waste and without their active cooperation and participation it is not possible to implement sustainable integrated waste to wealth management systems.



(2) Waste Management is an Income generating activity offering both large and small scale enterprises, as well as thousands of waste pickers, the opportunity to make a living from the collection, recovery, recycling, treatment and disposal of waste.

Though the activities of this youth in the city is regarded as informal sector and especially waste pickers or "Scavengers" are a group that is active in waste to wealth creators, but they are rarely officially recognized as contributing to that system. Their activities vary from providing informal street sweeping, and or household waste collector services, to recovering recyclable materials from different points in the waste trajectory from household to the final disposal site.

I believe acknowledging the work of this youth when planning and implementing waste to wealth programme is desirable. This youth's experience can assist in solving waste problems and by incorporating the youth in this waste management system. It is possible to help them increase their income generating possibilities and improve their working conditions.

### **Community Involvement**

Recognizing the importance of community participation in waste to wealth projects and programme is a key factor for their success. Community involvement in the planning and implementation of projects or programme is a complex proposition. However, the benefits of wide stakeholder involvement include a clear impression of the problem to be tackled; a clear idea of the possible solutions including perspective on affordability and desirability and finally the possibility of generating both public consensus and commitment to the project.

In conclusion, the participatory approaches I used include an awareness of the importance of gender in project planning and implementation. Given their different socio-cultural roles in the generation, collection and disposal of waste, men and women are found to have different perspective when it comes to its management. It is very important that these differences are considered in the planning and implementation of waste-to-wealth projects.

Finally, I am using this medium/conference to campaign for embracing of recycling because recycling uses less energy than producing goods from virgin materials and also results in fewer emissions. Although some materials; for recycling need to be transported around, the impact of this is significantly less than that of transporting raw materials from often – remote location in other parts of the world.

As more people recycle, more recycling plants will be built, and the impacts of transporting waste materials will eventually decrease.

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# Strengthening Survivors of Physical and Psychological Abuse

Divya Bajpai

*Countless research studies have been conducted that clearly communicate that violence against children is a frequent and often understated problem in our society. Although community responses to the abuse of a young child may be committed and concerned, the same concern does not spill over to adolescents (Garbarino and Eckenrode, 1997). Adolescents are not only viewed with less sympathy, they are considered better able to care for themselves and less in need of community services. They describe two major types of abused youth – teens who have been abused since childhood and those whose abuse starts at the onset of or sometime during adolescence.*

## Introduction

### An overview of Emotional Abuse, Psychological Maltreatment or Abuse

Emotional Abuse is the hidden form of maltreatment in instances of child abuse (Adam M Tomison and Joe Tucci, 1997). If a parent inadvertently or deliberately engages in a pattern of inappropriate emotional responses, the child can be said to have experienced emotional abuse (O'Hagan 1993). Emotional abuse is the least studied of all the forms of child maltreatment and its aetiology (i.e. theories of causation) is less developed (National Research Council 1993). Emotional abuse may occur as a distinct form of abuse (e.g. verbal abuse, threats to abandon a child, witnessing domestic violence) (Navarre 1987), or in conjunction with other forms of maltreatment (Herrenkohl 1990). It is increasingly considered to be the core issue in all forms of child abuse and neglect (Hart, Germain & Brassard 1987; Navarre 1987; McGee & Wolfe 1991). Not only does emotional abuse appear to be the most prevalent form of child maltreatment, but some professionals believe it to produce the most destructive consequences (Garbarino & Vondra 1987). The effects of emotional abuse may be manifested in the sense of helplessness and worthlessness often experienced by physically abused children (Hyman 1987), in the sense of violation and shame found in sexually abused children (Brassard & McNeil 1987), or in the lack of environmental stimulation and support for normal development found in neglected children (Schakel 1987). The psychological profile of abused children is generally agreed upon. They tend to distrust adults and have an intense need for nurturance, both physical and emotional. In addition, they often have poor self-concepts and difficulty in relating spontaneously and openly to others (Beezley, Martin, & Alexander, 1976). Abused children perceive family members more negatively than either their siblings, or the nonabused group; and the abused children's siblings would perceive family members more negatively than nonabused children's siblings. The children from the abusive families appeared more ambivalent (Sandra L. Halperin 1981).

A variety of labels appear to be used interchangeably with emotional abuse: mental cruelty (Navarre 1987); psychological maltreatment (Hart, Germain & Brassard 1987); emotional neglect (Whiting 1976; Junewicz 1983); mental injury (Kavanagh 1982); psychological battering (Garbarino, Guttman & Seeley 1986); and coercive family processes (Patterson 1982). Each term appears to reflect an attempt to incorporate within it a resolution of issues related to the following:

First, whether the abuse is intentional. For example, emotional neglect reflects acts of omission, a failure to take action; that is, the caregiver may not be aware that her/his behaviour or attitude is abusive. In contrast, a key assumption of mental cruelty and psychological battering is the caregiver's intent to cause harm; in other words, an act of commission. Second, whether there is a difference in the processes affected by this form of abuse. For example, psychological maltreatment focuses on the impact on the mental abilities of a child, such as intelligence, memory, recognition and attention. However, emotional abuse places a greater significance on the impact on a child's feelings and capacity to express emotion and develop relationships (O'Hagan 1993). Third, the emphasis placed on patterns in family relationships (attachments) as a cause of children's distorted social learning processes (Patterson 1982).

Garbarino terms 'psychological maltreatment' - 'a concerted attack by an adult on a child's development of self & social competence, a pattern of psychically destructive behaviour'. Under this definition, 'psychological maltreatment' is classified into five behavioural forms:

- **Rejecting:** behaviours which communicate or constitute abandonment of the child, such as a refusal to show affection
- **Isolating:** preventing the child from participating in normal opportunities for social interaction
- **Terrorising:** threatening the child with severe or sinister punishment, or deliberately developing a climate of fear or threat



- **Ignoring:** where the caregiver is psychologically unavailable to the child and fails to respond to the child's behaviour
- **Corrupting:** caregiver behaviour which encourages the child to develop false social values that reinforce antisocial or deviant behavioural patterns, such as aggression, criminal acts or substance abuse.

Garbarino has also argued that each of these forms of psychological maltreatment has a differential effect on children depending on their passage through the four major developmental stages of infancy, early childhood, school age and adolescence (Garbarino, Guttman & Seeley 1986). For example, rejection in infancy will result from a parent's refusal to accept and respond to a child's need for human contact and attachment. In early childhood, rejection is associated with a parent who actively excludes the child from family activities. At school age, rejection takes the form of a parent who consistently communicates a negative sense of identity to the child, and in adolescence, rejection is identified by a parent's refusal to acknowledge the young person's need for greater autonomy and self-determination (Garbarino, Guttman & Seeley 1986).

McGee and Wolfe (1991) constructed an operational definition of *Psychological Maltreatment* defining psychologically abusive acts in terms of parent-to-child communication. Utilising a developmental psychopathology perspective, they concluded that 'psychological maltreatment is any communication pattern that could undermine a child's resolution of important developmental tasks' (1991, p.14). Thus, it is the message conveyed to the child that is critical to the child's experience of the abuse. For example, destroying a child's toy communicates 'I hate what you value'.

Pillari (1991) argued that *Emotional Abuse* is intergenerational, highlighting deeply rooted patterns of scape-goating in families where children become the source of blame for the inability of parents to resolve the detrimental consequences of their own experiences of rejection and family trauma. Pillari notes that some professional systems continue to blame children for parental disturbances and focusing the treatment on them, further compounding the effects on the child and minimising the potential for parents to change behaviours and attitudes towards children.

According to O'Hagan, *Emotional Abuse* is 'the sustained, repetitive, inappropriate emotional response to the child's expression of emotion and its accompanying expressive behaviour' (1993, p.28). Such abuse inhibits the child's capacity for spontaneous, positive and appropriate emotional expression (O'Hagan 1995). *Psychological Abuse* is defined as 'sustained, repetitive, inappropriate behaviour which damages, or substantially reduces, the creative and developmental potential of crucially important mental faculties and mental processes of a child: these include intelligence, memory, recognition, perception, attention, language and moral development' (O'Hagan 1993, pp.33-34). Psychological abuse fundamentally undermines a child's capacity to understand and manage her/his environment by creating confusion and fear, thereby rendering the child more vulnerable and less confident (O'Hagan 1995).

In conclusion, understanding psychological abuse of children and the factors associated with it will help identify, assess and treat victims and perpetrators, help design effective intervention programs and help identify victims that fall in the high risk category in terms of their well being as well as mental health issues.

## Research Methodology

The sample includes matched 3 men and 2 women who were self-referred for treatment of depression through word-of-mouth reference. The study had an eligibility criteria for *inclusion* that the participant had to be at least 18 years old and not more than 20 years of age, was suffering from depression as assessed by the Health and Daily Living Form (HDL-Form), willing to participate in 21 sessions of group therapy program, including private sessions. The goal of therapy with the young participants in this study is of a supportive nature in order to help them deal with their fears and guilt. To encourage them to share their feelings of ambivalence as well as their negative, angry feelings towards their parents, siblings, extended family I have used various questionnaires to provide a nonthreatening, explicit outlet for conveying their experiences.

*Inclusionary* Criterion required that the participants reported high on psychological abuse by parents. The male participants in this study had also been physically abused in childhood. *Exclusionary* Criterion was chosen to be no sexual abuse history. The intake included demographic information about the participant, pre-test booklet of Health and Daily Living Form (Moos, 1984), physical and psychological abuse subscales of Childhood Maltreatment Interview Schedule (CMIS-Short Form) (Briere, 1990).

## Purpose of the Study

To significantly reduce the level of depression among physically and psychologically abused young adults. The goal of therapy with the young participants in this study is of a supportive nature in order to help them deal with their fears and guilt.



To encourage them to share their feelings of ambivalence as well as their negative, angry feelings towards their parents, siblings, extended family, psychodrama was decided to be an effective medium.

## **Experimental Design**

The experimental design for this study is "Within-Group Design". It is a type of experimental design where one looks at changes in behavior across the treatment. In this study, changes in the level of depression of the Moksha therapeutic intervention program were analyzed.

## **Variables**

**Independent Variable:** Moksha Intervention Program

The therapeutic intervention program was named as "MOKSHA" which means "to liberate". The purpose of this intervention was to help the participants liberate themselves from the past and the self-defeating schemas, behaviors learnt from it.

**Dependent Variable:** Depression

The dependent variable in this study is depression. The independent variable of intervention program will bring about a significant change in the level of depression.

The study will examine the level of global depression, depressive mood and ideation, endogenous depression, depressive features and depressed mood in victims of psychological abuse as participants of this study.

Control Variable in this study is that while the participants are a part of the present therapy program, they would not be taking any outside therapeutic consultation or intervention.

## **Tools**

The following *standardised* tools are used in this study as a part of analysis for the therapeutic program:

1. Health and Daily Living Form (HDL - Youth) (R.Moos, R.Cronkite and J.Finney, 1984) has 63 questions on the adaptational status of youth. It has six subscales with 36 items on the index of Health-Related Functioning, namely, self-confidence, positive mood, distressed mood, physical symptoms, medical conditions, health-risk behaviors. The other three subscales have 27 items on the index of Social Functioning, which are family activities, activities with friends, social integration in school. Reliability is .88 to .92 and the items have content and face validity.
2. The physical and psychological abuse subscales of Childhood Maltreatment Interview Schedule (CMIS) (J.Briere, 1992) contain items describing incidents from the past with father, mother, step-parent.

**Administration of Health and Daily Living Form (HDL-Form), Physical & Psychological Abuse subscales of CMIS-Short (45 minutes).**

## **PROCEDURE**

### ***Outline of Intervention Program - Events (60 – 75 minutes duration each)***

1. Establishment of Rapport and Trust with participants in individual sessions (5 sessions).
2. Introducing the 5 group participants. To introduce the participants to the technique of reading folktales for therapy, I read the Story – 'Heaven on Earth' from Tenali Rama.
3. In this story, the king looks for heaven on earth and is willing to spend ten thousand gold coins to find this place. The courtier Tenali promises the king to build such a place and periodically takes money from the king. Finally the king is led to a beautiful garden where children are playing and the king realizes on seeing the joy, beauty there that happiness lies within. We discussed what the story meant to us.
4. Participants read stories from Tenali Rama, selected for each of the 5 participant. 'The River Water' describes a story where the king loses interest in managing the affairs of his kingdom when an old minister



dear to him retires and leaves for his village. His separation affects the king deeply and he remains depressed, till shown further in the story how life carries on joining and separating like rivers. The participant who read this story had lost her biological mother 2 years back and now had a step-mother. In 'Proof of Innocence' Tenali Rama is asked by his beloved king to give a proof of his innocence when a jealous courtier keeps inciting the king against Tenali's integrity and trustworthiness as a minister.

'For the Children' is the story of children who fight and then become friends after repairing the damage done to each other's play objects and thus heal a broken friendship with love. 'The Most Beautiful Flowers' revolves around the king who has been sad for a long time and is taken by Tenali to a garden in search of beautiful flowers to give pleasure to his sense and instead finds himself among children who are laughing, playing and making merry. 'The Ancestral Wealth' revolves around the theme of jealousy, lying and cheating by the courtiers to get Tenali punished by the king, and how he extricates himself with presence of mind and cleverness.

Games

1. THE MAGIC SHOP

The magic shop is a psychodramatic warm-up game. The director may become the shopkeeper or he may appoint someone from the group. The shopkeeper opens by talking about the wares in the shop. "I have courage, love, longevity, beauty, freedom, sexual satisfaction, etc. And I will barter with you for any item you want." Someone in the group indicates they want more courage. The shopkeeper asks, "What are you willing to give for courage? It's a very valuable-salable item." The person offers cowardice and the shopkeeper tells him, "We have stacks and stacks of cowardice. We give it away. Offer me something valuable." The "purchaser" says, "I will give you ten years of my life. I would rather live a shorter life than a life of compromise." The director zeros in and asks the potential protagonist how he compromises. Now the protagonist begins to talk about his life and how he tries to please everybody and gain approval. The warm-up and the session thus move from the abstract to a concrete life dilemma. In the psychodramatic form of "Lifeboat," the session begins by having members of the group volunteer to come forward and sit in a semicircle, as if they are in the lifeboat. They are briefly informed of the premise of the role-playing situation.

2. THE LIFEBOAT/ THE SURVIVAL GAME

The following instructions are given for this game

"You are in a lifeboat that is slowly sinking. In order to maximize the possible survival of most of the group, the group must vote every three minutes on putting a member over the side. In order to vote most judiciously in this situation, we will first have each member of the group take up to three minutes to state *why they should survive*." In a sense this

rhetorical question raises the basic issue of the meaning of your life. The most interesting aspect of this warm-up is that it forces a person to succinctly present his or her *reason for living*, and in the process the group rapidly moves to a deeper level of emotional communication.

3. Stories from Tenali Rama

Name	Title of Story	Theme of Story
Samuel	A Special Light	Social goals, service to society, knowledge
Virendra	The Roses	Flattery
Gaurav	Moonlit Night	Honesty
Reena	True Artist	Talent is rewarded
Avantika	Powdered Rye	Justice

Samuel questioned the moral of the story he read. Both his parents are highly educated and working, teaching in schools. If education is a special light, he wanted to know, then why through a period of 10 years, they never realized that they should stop their elder son from dragging Samuel by his shirt collar from one room to another,



or when he was beaten on the back with a belt. Finally, he mused that he could follow a different path and through education on child protection issues, he could follow a path of light.

Virendra's father being a successful businessman is always surrounded by yes-men, often by choice. Virendra refuses to entertain such people, unless it is someone whom he needs to accommodate for a while, out of necessity. This often puts him at odds with both his parents who like to show off their money and power. He has a keen intelligence. He shared that from the story he learnt that there could be diplomatic ways of expressing the truth, or his opinion without landing him in trouble for saying something.

Gaurav has been wrestling with issues of how much success can a person get if he remains honest. His family has been going through some financial difficulties.

#### **4. The Earliest Memories**

In phase I, each person in the group takes five to ten minutes to verbally express his feelings of love, hostility, or guilt for each of his parents. This serves to warm up the group to these feelings. In phase II, the person who appears most warmed up to a session selects his director from the group and then presents several key scenes from his life that express the reason for his hostility or guilt.

Virendra, Avantika being the extraverted types were more willing to share their experiences. Virendra enacted his earliest memory when he was 7 years old and in Class III of his schooling. There had been a drawing competition in his class and he won the second prize. When he came home and showed his mother the prize, she was at first pleased, then asked him what he had drawn and how he won the prize. He told her that the competition required them to draw any scene and he drew a small boy, face colored yellow, and a woman standing beside him with her face colored red. When his drawing teacher asked him, why the colours were different, and who were they, Virendra said that the small boy was himself, who always liked to keep smiling and laughing, the woman was his mother, who is always angry. When Virendra related to his mother that on hearing this, his teacher awarded him the second prize, she slapped him very hard on the cheek. Since then he gradually stopped laughing, and started expressing his feelings through poetry.

Avantika enacted scenes from her childhood, where her mother criticized her for looking pretty and was disapproving of her husband praising their daughter.

#### **5. The Earliest Memories – Continued.**

After the protagonist has expressed his negativity, he is supplied with an auxiliary ego parent who fulfills all of the ideals views he has about a loving, compassionate parent. We enacted various scenes during this session and I played the role of mother for each of the participant as he or she wanted the scene to be played out.

#### **6. Family of Origin Social Atom / Questions for Exploration.**

In doing a family of origin social atom clients are able to put the family system that they grew up in onto paper as a visual, relational image. Relationships that were close, distant, overwhelming or absent, become clearer as they reveal themselves in relative size and proximity to the client. This is the basic relational map, the world that the client grew up in that may be playing itself out in her life today.

1. Who were your close relationships that you continue to draw strength from today?
2. From whom did you experience rejection that still affects you today?
3. With whom did you feel in good rapport or connection?
4. How did you experience yourself in your family system?
5. How do you think others experienced you in your family system?
6. Who did you feel seen and/or understood by?
7. What would you like to say to yourself at the age represented here from where you are today?
8. Who do you have something to say to?
9. Who would you like to hear something from?
10. Who can you "double" for in this system of participants?



## 7. The Mirror Technique

In the mirror technique, an auxiliary ego portrays someone who is reluctant or unable to perform for himself. The mirror involves a stand-in for the protagonist.

## 8. The Future-Projection Technique

This method involves having the subject act out, with the support of auxiliary egos and a group, a meaningful situation in which the subject expects to act in the future. It is also important that the protagonist *really* is going to participate in the situation in the future.

## 9. Diagramming and Analysing Life Roles (Adopted from Dayton, 2000)

**Goals :** To understand the number and variety of roles played. To observe those roles in relation to one another. To explore content and satisfaction within the roles.

Participants are given a pencil and paper. They are asked to put a circle somewhere on the paper with their name inside of the circle and extend lines like spokes of a wheel from the outside of the circle for about one and one half inches. The next instruction is to write on each spoke the major roles they play in their lives, for example, daughter, sister, cousin, brother, niece, grandchild, student and so on. They were then asked to choose one of those roles they would like to explore or one in which they feel some conflict.

## 10. Corrective Social Atom / Questions for Exploration (Adopted from Dayton, 2000)

In the corrective social atom the client is drawing her social atom as she would like it to look, diagramming her life as she would like it to be.

1. Write a letter to anyone on your social atom to whom you have something to say.
2. Reverse roles with anyone on your social atom and write a letter "as" that person back to yourself that you would like to receive.
3. Write a journal entry "as" yourself.
4. Reverse roles with anyone on your social atom and write a journal entry "as" that person.
5. Make a list of the old myth's and meanings of this system that you believed and lived by and reframe them into new meaning.
6. Write a mission statement for your life starting today. What are your goals for you life today? Divide a paper into three columns and fill in each column:

"now"	"stepping stones"	"long-term"
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## 11. Story Reading – Vikram Vetal

Name	Title of Story	Theme of Story
Samuel	<i>King Chandrasen</i>	Intelligence and Justice
Virendra	<i>Suryamukhi</i>	Law and Dutifulness
Gaurav	<i>Dream-Girl</i>	Sensibility, Responsibility



**FAMILY FANTASY GAMES (Adopted from Joe Lamontagne)**

The protagonist would select an area of interest from a list of twenty topics and then begin to have a session using role reversal, doubles, soliloquy, and other psychodramatic techniques. Eg. Tell your father (or mother) what you would do differently if you were in his (her) place. Why? Think about one person or thing that makes you angry. Tell what you really think about it, what you're going to do about it. What have you already done? Did it help? Why, or why not? This would invariably lead into a situation, such as an incident at school, work or at the playground.

**12. Story Reading – Vikram Vetal**

Name	Title of the Story	Theme of Story
Reena	<i>True Justice</i>	Values and Dharma
Avantika	<i>Dreams come true</i>	Duty, hard work, dreaming
Samuel	<i>The Selfish Merchant</i>	Selflessness

**13. GAME USING PHOTOGRAPHS**

Photographs can be very useful in concretizing the family, someone a client needs to talk about, or themselves from another time in life. Photos can be described, shared, or clients can literally speak to the person in the picture. As instructed during the previous session the participants had brought along photos which they felt were closer to their heart, of all the people about whom they wanted to talk. I had often employed this methodology when I had to help someone open up and talk about their life, I would ask them to prepare an album of photos of themselves at various stages. This method has been used by other experiential therapists (Dayton, 2000).

**14. THE TRAUMA TIMELINE (Adopted from Dayton, 2000)**

The participants are asked to create a timeline on a piece of paper that goes from birth to the client's current age range and place line markers every three years. The clients were invited to enter any traumas that occurred or felt significant in the appropriate place along the timeline. Clients often see how traumas occurred in time, they notice particular ages where they experienced multiple traumas, for example. They get a picture of the cumulative aspect of trauma. Three of the participants had experienced sustained abusive environment. The other two had experienced neglectful, shaming environment.

**15. Earliest Memories Session (Phase IV) with theme of Role Reversal**

The protagonist reverses roles, becomes his real parent, and is asked questions that attempt to elicit the reasons why he or she has failed as a parent.

**16. Stories from Akbar Birbal**

Name	Name of the Story	Theme of Story
Samuel	<i>The beautiful child</i>	Beauty, ugliness, love of parent for their child beautiful
Virendra	<i>The Cursed Face</i>	Stigma, Victimization
Gaurav	<i>Birbal's Rice Pudding</i>	Breaking of a promise
Reena	<i>The Colour of Hair</i>	Old Age, Youth
Avantika	<i>Whose wife is She</i>	Sexuality

In the first story both the king and the mother of a child with distorted features th inks their child is the most beautiful. In the second story the king loses a lot of wealth when he employs a particular artisan. So he puts the man in prison to be hanged later. The artisan asks whose face is more cursed, his or the king's so that on meeting the king to display his skill, he finds himself sentenced to death. In the third story, the king promises a reward to anyone who can stand for the whole night in the river by the palace in chilly winter. A man performs this



feat for the gold coins promised as reward but King Birbal refuses to reward him saying that the man gained warmth by looking at a candle lit in the palace. Birbal, the king's minister shows the king his action in a new light, by taking everyone to a hunt in the jungle where he pretends to cook rice by keeping it away from the fire and everyone is left hungry. The king realizes his folly and gives the reward as promised.

The last story tells the story of a man who enchanted by the beauty of a merchant's wife lures her away and her husband complaints to the king for justice.

The discussions centered on the participants's faith that do parents love their children unconditionally

### 17. Stories from Tenali Rama

Name	Name of the Story	Theme of Story
Samuel	<i>The Bowl of Water</i>	Wit, Precaution, Patience
Virendra	<i>The Arabian Horses</i>	Justice
Gaurav	<i>True Beauty</i>	Social Responsibility
Reena	<i>A Living Portrait</i>	Anger
Avantika	<i>The Most Valuable Thing</i>	Freedom

The discussion centred around how if we keep our cool, we can handle situations in life to the satisfaction of people involved, whether justice really exists in this world, does the society fulfill its responsibilities to us so that we should think of giving something back, how anger hurts the self first before hurting the object of anger, and what freedom means to us.

Finally group discussion was conducted with the participants regarding closure of formal sessions, feedback taken and post-test booklet measuring depression was administered.

### Results and Discussion

**Youth Health and Daily Living Form (HDL) - What differences exist between level of depression in the participants of this study during pre-test and post-test administration of HDL questionnaire?**

**SAMPLE TABLE Participant 1: Samuel**

Variable		Pre-Test	Post-Test
Health Related Functioning	Self Confidence	15 / 18	15 / 18
	Positive Mood	5 / 18	15 / 18
	Distressed Mood	14 / 18	3 / 18
	Physical Symptoms	18 / 24	4 / 24
	Medical Conditions	6 / 6	1 / 6
	Health Risk Behavior	0 / 12	0 / 12
Social Functioning	Family Activities	5 / 10	5 / 10
	Activity with Friends	5 / 10	7 / 10

The above results on the pre-test scores show that Samuel had a very low level of positive mood, and high distressed mood, i.e. he was very depressed. After participating in Moksha Therapeutic Intervention Program, on the post test scores his positive mood is at a high level and distressed mood has reduced to a very low level. Thus there is a significant reduction in his level of depression and it is at a negligible level. The same questionnaire upon being



administered after a follow-up period of 4 weeks gave the same results on the *Post-test* scores showing that the results of the intervention have sustained over a period of time.

All the other four participants rated high distressed mood, low positive mood. There was increased activity with friends and similar or greater number of activities with family. Self-confidence scores had improved and health functioning had improved with lesser physical symptoms and health-risk behaviors.

**Childhood Maltreatment Interview Schedule – Short Form - *What is the level of physical and psychological abuse experienced by participants of this study?***

The physical abuse subscale has a score total of 5 points. All items are based on severe physical abuse. The response can range from a score of 1 to a maximum as listed by the participant. The physical abuse subscale has a score total of minimum 7 points to 42 points. The incidents are rated as never to over 20 times in a year.

**TABLE –CMIS-Short - Physical Abuse Subscale Results**

Name	Physical Abuse	No. of years
Samuel	4	10
Virendra	5	12
Gaurav	0	0
Reena	0	0
Avantika	0	0

Among the participants of this study, Samuel had experienced high physical abuse, Virendra had experienced very high physical abuse, sustained over a period of 10 years and above. Gaurav, Reena and Avantika had not experienced any physical punishment that could be categorized as physical abuse. They had experienced minor disciplinary actions in their families.

**TABLE – Psychological Abuse subscale of CMIS-Short**

**Psychological Abuse Scores**

Name	Yell At you	Insult you	Criticise You	Try to make you feel guilty	Ridicule or humiliate you	Embarrass you in front of others	Make you feel like you were a bad person
Samuel	5	4	3	6	3	2	6
Virendra	6	6	6	6	6	4	6
Gaurav	6	5	6	6	3	4	3
Reena	6	5	6	5	4	5	6
Avantika	6	6	5	4	6	6	6

0 = never, 1 = once a year, 2 = twice a year, 3 = 3-5 times year, 4 = 6-10 times a year, 5 = 11-20 times a year, 6 = over 20 times a year

Samuel = 29 / 42, Virendra = 40 / 42, Gaurav= 33 / 42, Reena = 37 / 42, Avantika= 39 / 42

The above results show that all the participants have experienced a high level of psychological abuse. All the participants have experienced moderately high level of psychological abuse.

**Conclusion**

The hypothesis of this study that the intervention program titled ‘Moksha’ would cause significant different in the pre-test and post-test scores of depression as measured by Health and Daily Living Manual (Moos, 1984) has come true.



The participants besides overcoming their depression and are better adjusted having learnt new, healthy, adaptive life skills. The follow-up period of six weeks has shown consistency in their progress. "MOKSHA" therapeutic intervention brings significant difference in the level of depression.

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Vikram and Vetral Children's Stories

Tales from Akbar Birbal

Tales from Tenali Rama

## Additional Information About The Stories Used

I chose Tales from Akbar Birbal, Tenali Rama and Vikram Vetral because they contain stories rewritten from common folklore which are engrossing and interesting, are a rich source of entertainment, help us to learn something valuable and enrich our minds. Each one of the stories carry simple lessons, be it humility or trusting one's skills and instincts.

## Background

Stories of Akbar and Birbal are extremely popular in India. The several instances when Birbal uses his wit and intelligence to calm the ire of Emperor Akbar and amuse him at the same time, are told to children from a very early age. It used to be part of the oral tradition of storytelling, but in recent years, these stories have been compiled into books by various authors. Akbar was the third Mughal Emperor to rule over India in the 16th century. He is also known as Akbar the Great for his contributions in the areas of art, architecture and music. It said that in his reign, Hindus and Muslims lived side by side in syncretic harmony. He was illiterate himself, but provided patronage to fine arts and literature. In his court he had Nine Jewels or 'Navr tans.' These were poets, musicians, advisers and learned men.

**Tenali Ramakrishna**, popularly known as Tenali Rama, was a court-poet and court Jester of Krishnadeva Raya of the Vijayanagara empire. He was known for wit and prodigious poetry written in the Telugu language. Ramakrishna was also a great scholar of several languages that included Kannada, Telugu, Marathi, Hindi, and Tamil. His notability spread beyond Vijayanagar (present-day Karnataka), to areas that reach as far as Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh today. Ramakrishna's life fills us with wonder. He was yet a boy when he lost his father. Because of the narrow-mindedness of the teachers of the day he was denied education. By his own efforts he acquired education and attained fame as a scholar and poet in the court of Krishnadevaraya. He used humor to teach arrogant people a lesson. He corrected any one - a rich man or a learned man or a minister - who did wrong; he corrected even the king.



**Raja (king) Vikramaditya** ruled the kingdom of Ujjain 19 centuries ago. This is the story of how to achieve occult powers the king has to bring a corpse of a daemon to a Tantrik (occultist). He would climb up a tree to get the corpse and carry it on his shoulder. During his walk, the vetaal in the body would tell him a story, and then ask a question about the story. The conditions for Vikram are: if he speaks (breaks his silence), the corpse returns to the top of the tree, and Vikram has to restart - if he knows the answer to Vetaal's question, he must answer otherwise his body will fall into pieces.



# Young People Strengthening Their Community

Jen Barron

Dorset is situated in North Eastern Tasmania, Australia. It is a Municipal area made up of a superb natural environment with clean air and beautiful scenery, ranging from coastal beaches to patchwork farmlands and temperate rain forests on the surrounding hills and mountains. The area is known for its prolific production of potatoes and forestry activities.

At the time of the 2001 Census, there were 454,841 people living in Tasmania. 6,967 people lived in the Dorset local government area; they formed 1.5% of the state's population.

The Municipality is made up of 12 small towns and the main service centre is Scottsdale with a population of 1922 people.

Although the natural environment is spectacular the geographic isolation of the community poses its own challenges – especially for young people. Some of the challenges that existed before I started working in the area included the lack of access to public transport, little youth specific information in terms of health and well being, limited access to sport and recreation opportunities (unless you played football and netball) and little organised entertainment or activities outside the school setting.

## Young People in the Community

Young people are defined by the Australian and Tasmanian Governments as those aged from 12 to 25 years. At the time of the 2001 Census Dorset had 1,178 young people. They formed 17% of the total population of Dorset and 52% of them were under 17.

## Youth Health Officer

In late 2001 the Dorset community won a major Australian Government grant to bring additional health services into the area. These services included a mental health worker, a primary health care co-ordinator, some community transport, increased podiatry and speech therapy services and for the first time ever a youth specific health worker was engaged. I won this position of Youth Health Officer and have been working in the position since that time. The young people of Dorset now have someone to work alongside them in the community. As the position had not existed before my employment, and at the time I had a very flexible Manager, I was able to create the position as I went along as no one really had any expectations. I began working in the community from a strengths perspective and was allowed to continue to do so because it brought results. The Council received positive recognition within the community and the funding body was happy.

## Empowerment

The goal of my practice is to empower young people to be the strength of the Dorset community. I believe that they already have the resources and tools within them and in their community to be the strength of their community and it is my role to assist young people to realise this and also to advocate for them as valuable members of the whole of community.

According to Saleebey (2006, p.11), "...empowerment indicates the intent to, and the processes of, assisting individuals, groups, families, and communities to discover and expend the resources and tools within and around them."

When I first started working from this strengths perspective with young people by translating negative risk factors into protective factors I was unaware of the extent to which the whole of the community could be influenced. This approach has aided in the development of resiliency in youth and has also resulted in increased social capital for the whole community.

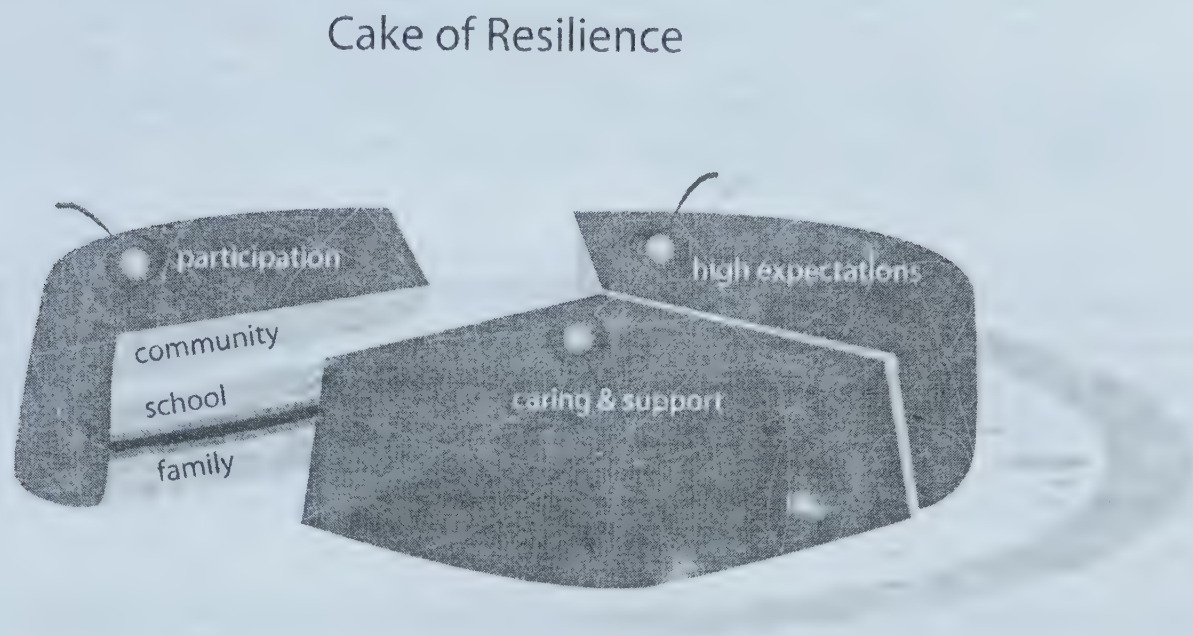
Saleebey states (2006 p.247) "In a very important sense, then, fostering resilience and capitalizing on and extending strengths and capabilities is about building community and creating opportunities for belonging and participation. This is where the paths of community development and resilience cross."

Some people try to solve young people's "problems" by looking at the underlying risk factors associated with such things as excessive alcohol use.

However, according to Benard (1991), "To be successful, prevention interventions must focus on enhancing and creating positive environmental contexts-families, schools and communities that, in turn, reinforce positive behaviors." Benard (1991) also suggests that the development of protective factors in



these environmental contexts happens in three areas – caring and support, high expectations and participation. See Figure One.



**Figure One**

It is the environmental context of participation in the community and the area of participation that I focus on in my work practice to develop resiliency in youth that leads to increased social capital within the whole community.

### **Social Capital And Reciprocity**

According to Putnam in his landmark book *Bowling Alone*, "social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." (2000 p.19) Putnam (2000 p.8) refers to "social capital...as...networks of reciprocity." Putnam goes on to highlight reciprocity as a major component of social capital. Not necessarily you do something for me and I'll do something for you but more the spirit that if I do something for you then someone else, some other time will do something for me. It's larger than just an interpersonal connection between two people. In addition, Benard (1991) encourages us to let go and to create a system "...based of reciprocity and sharing rather than control".

### **Fewcha**

The main strategy I use in my work practice to empower young people to be the strength of their community is through a "youth advisory group". They call themselves "FEWCHA"! The word is not an acronym – it's just their way of spelling "FUTURE"!

The group was established in September 2001. They were made a special committee of the Dorset Council and they meet together on a regular basis to plan and implement activities, programmes and projects that enhance the health and well being of the young people of Dorset and consequently the whole Dorset community.

Currently the group has 25 members aged between 11 and 17. They come from many of the towns from across the Municipality, are an equal mix of males and females, and attend a number of different schools. They meet about every three weeks in one of the towns around Dorset. They have a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Minutes are produced from each meeting and are circulated within the group and minutes are also included in each report that I give to Dorset Council meetings.

Two representatives from the group attend each Council meeting and report back to FEWCHA on the content of Council meetings. A representative from Council attends FEWCHA meetings and on occasion all of FEWCHA goes to Council or all Councillors attend FEWCHA meetings. There is a strong sense of connection and support between the older members of Council and the younger members of FEWCHA. They value each other and the contribution that each is making to the whole of community.



According to Kretzmann & McKnight (1993 p.29) in Saleebey (2006 p.248), "The unique energy and creativity of youth is often denied to the community because the young people of the neighbourhood are all too often viewed only in terms of their lack of maturity and practical life experience. Categorized as the product of "immature" minds, the legitimate dreams and desires of youth are frequently ignored by the older, more "responsible" members of the community...Given the proper opportunities, however, youth can always make a significant contribution to the development of communities in which they live. What is needed for this to happen are specific projects that will connect youth with the community in ways that will increase their own self-esteem and level of competency while at the same time improving the quality of life of the community as a whole."

FEWCHA have not only developed specific projects that have connected them with their community, increased their own self-esteem, level of competency and the quality of life of the whole community but they have won both national and state awards for several of these projects which I will now discuss.

## Projects

### 1. The Wheel Deal

Young people and youth service providers throughout Tasmania have consistently raised transport as an issue for young people. In response to this, the Office of Youth Affairs in Tasmania initiated a transport project on behalf of the stakeholders. One of the outcomes of this transport project was the Tasmanian Youth Transport Strategy, which recommends a number of options to improve transport for young people. One of the key recommendations is that...

*Community Transport Brokerage project be encouraged to improve the sharing and availability of community transport resources.*

This recommendation was targeted for a pilot project and the Dorset Council and FEWCHA won the tender for the pilot for Tasmania. The Office of Youth Affairs and the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources provided \$48000, as well as policy support to resource the pilot.

Once completed and evaluated, it was expected that the pilot would assist in the process of informing the way transport options might be improved for young people in all parts of the State, with particular focus on young people in rural and isolated areas.

FEWCHA and the Dorset Council employed a Transport Services Officer. This Officer conducted a transport audit of the area. This included not just being aware of all the transport options that are available but also identifying which services held which type of licence and therefore where they were or weren't allowed to travel and with whom. A transport specific youth needs audit was also conducted.

The transport officer, FEWCHA and myself then got together to brain storm possible solutions to the transport issues based on the needs that had been identified and the resources that we had available to us.

The aim of the project was to make better use of existing services rather than to develop new services. Many different options were considered before the concept of The Wheel Deal was settled on and the name created by FEWCHA.

The Wheel Deal transport hotline is a free call youth transport hotline. Young people requiring transport can call an 1800 number, which is answered by a message bank that is checked regularly (Monday to Friday 9.00 – 10.00am on regular council opening days) by Dorset Council administrative staff. Young people identify where and when they need transport and the transport co-ordinator brokers a transport deal with local taxi and chartered bus companies, provides information about existing transport options or investigates other flexible solutions. Cost of the transport is negotiated between the transport co-ordinator and the young person, with The Wheel Deal subsidising the bulk of the cost. The general guideline used is that the young person pays 1/3 and The Wheel Deal 2/3 of the total cost.

At the end of the pilot period The Wheel Deal was nominated in the Tasmanian 2005 Local Government Awards for Excellence. As a result, it won the Community Development Category prize as well as the overall prize as the winner of the 2005 Local Government Award for Excellence.

The project was considered to be a success and further funding was sought to try and secure sustainable funding for the project. This is still in process! However, the model is being held up as a possible option for rural communities as part of the core passenger service review that is currently being conducted on a statewide basis.

A youth transport project was created by young people that meets their exact transport needs.



## 2. The Kameleon

In 2001 FEWCHA acquired a van from the Department of Health and Human Services for free. It was an ex-dental van. The group dreamt up the idea of having a place where young people could hang out and that could travel to where young people were with health information, resources and entertainment relevant to their needs. FEWCHA decided to call this place The Kameleon.

FEWCHA received a grant of \$12200 to get The Kameleon to an operational stage. It was launched as part of National Youth Week celebrations in April 2002. The Kameleon then visited community events and activities across Dorset. Very little time was available in my schedule to take the Kameleon to the streets for "drop in".

FEWCHA then entered The Kameleon in the Heart Foundation Local Government Awards and won the best rural and remote community project for Tasmania and Australia and the best overall project for Tasmania in 2002.

In July 2003 FEWCHA hosted "Big Decisions for the FEWCHA" a major consultation day for young people in Dorset. Young people asked for a place to "hang out" in their towns. FEWCHA put The Kameleon up as an initiative proposal to the Foundation for Young Australians. The Foundation funded FEWCHA initially for \$50000 and then another \$25000 because of the success of their initiative and the group itself.

FEWCHA and Council then employed a Youth Outreach Officer to take The Kameleon not only to community events and activities but also to towns in Dorset allowing young people wide access to health information, resources and something to do! Since the employment of the Youth Outreach Officer The Kameleon has visited many towns and community events in Dorset. The numbers of young people accessing The Kameleon is high – especially in smaller isolated towns.

In June 2005 more funding was required to continue the important work of The Kameleon and the service that it provides to the young people of Dorset. The Dorset Council agreed to financially support the ongoing operations of The Kameleon for the 2006-06 and then 2006-07 financial years for \$43000 each year. The Council also voted to assess the ongoing financial support of The Kameleon at the beginning of the 2007-08 financial year.

Since The Kameleon became fully operational in mid May 2004 it has impacted upon young people in towns across Dorset and been present at community events. From January to June 2006 The Kameleon has visited 51 locations with an average visitation of 14 young people.

Every stage of the development, implementation and success of this project has been about FEWCHA and their ideas to meet the needs of the young people of Dorset. They have been supported to make their ideas a reality. The Kameleon provides a point of reference for young people, someone to help with issues, a safe place to chill out and it is informative, fun, raises awareness and gives young people something constructive to do.

## 3. Severely Isolation

Several groups of young people from the North of Tasmania applied for a grant of \$20000 from Tasmanian Regional Arts to do a regionally based project called Net Connect. Each group of young people decided the type of artistic medium they would like to use. FEWCHA chose film. The group titled their film *Severely Isolation*.

*Severely Isolation* is a documentary written, directed, and filmed by members of FEWCHA. *Severely Isolation* follows world-renowned naturalist Nigel Fimbottom (a David Attenborough type character) around the rural municipality of Dorset for a quirky observation of the area's townships and people. The theme that drives *Severely Isolation* is about breaking the stereotype of rural communities being socially stuck in the Dark Ages and that they have nothing to offer.

One of the project aims was to link regional/rural and/or isolated young people, with international peers living in similar situations around the world. This link up would occur via the Internet. FEWCHA decided that they would like to link with young people living in New York who would experience isolation in a completely different way to them.

Once FEWCHA had finished their film they sent it to New York to some young people who were working on a project called Art Smart. The young people from Art Smart sent images of their work back to FEWCHA.

The work from each of the groups in the North of Tasmania and their international partners was produced into a DVD presentation which went on a Road Trip around the North of the State. The DVD



was viewed by school groups and communities across the North and was also shown at an exhibition at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston, Tasmania.

FEWCHA also decided to enter their film into the Reelife Short Film Festival in Sydney, Australia. This Film Festival is a creative project of Vibewire Youth Services, a non-profit media organization providing creative and media opportunities for young people. Reelife provides an accessible and inspiring channel for young filmmakers to present their stories and ideas on issues that are important to them.

Out of a shortlist of 15 films made by people under 25 from across Australia, winners were selected by a panel of industry professionals for various prizes. *Severely Isolation* won the Best Film by Under 18's.

FEWCHA President at the time Michael Shea went to Sydney to collect the award on behalf of the group and said...

"I am shocked that the film won against so many others in Sydney. It went down well in Tassie when we took it round to all the schools that were involved in the Project. But to be recognised at the national level for a film we made about the isolation issues that young people face in Tassie is surreal. It's excellent because the film highlights just how much skill and talent young people from small rural communities have. It gets the message out there."

#### **4. Mobile Fun Box**

Skate Parks are expensive! Bridport, one of the 12 towns in Dorset already has a skate park that is managed by Council. Since I started as the Youth Health Officer in 2001 the need for the development of further skate spaces in Dorset has been continually identified.

A skate space committee was formed consisting mainly of young people. These young people raised money and community awareness of their cause. They put on a skate exhibition day in a local car park and raised money by riding their bikes to a skate park in Launceston – over 70kms away and then on another occasion riding their bikes from Launceston to Hobart some 250kms over two days. This committee of young people eventually merged with FEWCHA who have continued to push to achieve the reality of a skate space for other towns in Dorset.

It became evident to the group that achieving skate parks for each rural town that wanted one would be an impossible task because of the finances required. By chance the group came across the design for a mobile fun box – a skate park element that came in a transportable form. The group decided that this would be the perfect solution to their skate park needs. The fun box could be transported to each town on rotation that had an appropriate space. This could meet the needs of many more young people than just locating another skate park in another town!

The spaces where the mobile fun box is located can also be used for other purposes when the mobile fun box is not there. Also, each time the mobile fun box comes back to the town it has a fresh feel about it – increasing the likelihood of the space being a positive environment for young people and the community long term.

The small towns of Derby and Branhholm had existing "old" tennis courts that were under-utilised. Fencing around these courts was modified to allow the mobile skate equipment to enter these areas. The town of Winnaleah had a tennis court that had a broken surface. Finances were secured to re-surface this area.

Funding these adjustments and for the actual mobile fun box, came from fundraising at events co-ordinated by young people, the Dorset Council, Sport and Recreation Tasmania and the Foundation for Young Australians.

FEWCHA has had a strategic partnership with the Foundation for Young Australians for the last three years. Part of this partnership has included the Foundation assisting the group to obtain the mobile fun box. The Dorset Council has a partnership agreement with the State Government and part of that agreement included Sport and Recreation and the Dorset Council working together to obtain this mobile fun box. FEWCHA made strategic use of these partnerships to meet the needs of the young people of Dorset.

The actual mobile fun box was sourced from Skate Ramps Australia in Victoria and is the first of its kind in Tasmania. The mobile fun box is transported by the vehicle purchased from funds secured by FEWCHA for towing the Kameleon.

The total cost of the project to date has been \$40000.

The official launch of the mobile fun box was held in one of the regional towns and over 100 people turned up to celebrate the day. Professional skaters also attended the day and there was live music. The mobile fun box is now on a three week rotational journey around the regional towns of Dorset.



This project was designed and achieved by the young people of Dorset and meets their needs as identified by them! It was nominated for the Heart Foundation Local Government Awards and received a highly commended award. It is currently being judged in an Active Towns competition.

## Winning=Capacity Building

It may sound arrogant to speak about winning awards and large grants for projects. However, it's not about the winning or even about the entering or writing submissions for funding. The winning process is about capacity building. The first grant the young people won for The Kamelon for \$8600 encouraged them to believe that their dream of turning the ugly old dental van into an outreach van could become a reality. When they won the Heart Foundation Local Government Award for Australia for The Kameleon they knew that other people believed in them. It increased their belief in themselves and what they were doing. It increased their capacity to apply for more significant grants to bring even bigger dreams into reality. Success has not always been guaranteed but more success than failure has kept the resilience balance in the black!

## Policy

The above projects and many others have been conducted in partnership between the Dorset Council, community groups, funding bodies, FEWCHA and myself as the Youth Health Officer. There are lasting outcomes for Dorset as well as for the young people who have been involved in the group since its inception. However, funding is always tenuous! FEWCHA decided that they should act strategically and applied for a grant to employ a consultant to develop a Youth Policy for Dorset. As part of this policy FEWCHA developed a model of youth participation.

This model was named by the group the "Real Wheel" model of youth participation. In the centre are FEWCHA and young people in Dorset closely surrounded and supported by the youth health officer and team. The spokes of the wheel are the projects that the group is involved in including...The Kameleon, The Wheel Deal, Training and Mentoring, the Foundation for Young Australians, Community Events, Celebrations, Strategic Planning and Youth Initiated Projects. As the activities of the group increase, these spokes will increase further adding strength to the "Real Wheel". On the outside on the wheel are the organizations that support FEWCHA and young people in Dorset. These include the Dorset Council, Government Agencies, Dorset Connector and Dorset EDG, Sporting, Social and Service Clubs, the Tasmanian Youth Consultative Committee, the Northern Youth Co-ordinating Committee and other Youth Groups, Schools, Training Providers and Employers. Where the rubber hits the road FEWCHA have named up the values that drive the "Real Wheel" as Consultation, Communication, Integration, Respect, Participation and Trust. This model strongly informs the policy that the Dorset Council has now adopted. See Figure Two.



**Figure Two**

The objective of the policy is to "Ensure that the Dorset Council consults with and involves young people in its decision making processes and activities.". The policy includes elements on Youth Participation, Young People, Service and Support, Values, Council's Commitment to Young People, Key Principles Endorsed by Dorset Council, Working Together and Planning and Review.

FEWCHA successfully uses this policy to lobby Council for ongoing funding and support for their projects, activities and initiatives.

## Why

These projects and initiatives have been successful.

However, in practice it is not about the projects but about the outcomes achieved in terms of growth and development of the young people and the community as they achieve the ideals and objectives that they set for themselves. The projects have met needs as identified by the young people themselves. If they were living in a different place and in a different time then another set of projects would be appropriate. The critical factor is that the opportunity to participate has been provided and that the young people have slowly built up a sense of hope as they have trusted themselves more and more to participate in their community with a sense of reciprocity and not control!



According to Saleebey (2006) "...the central dynamic of the strengths perspective is precisely the rousing of hope, of tapping into the visions and the promise of that individual, family, or community.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the young people who have been involved in FEWCHA have developed a sense of hope and a future that they may not necessarily have had before. The group have developed significant projects, organised and/or participated in whole of community events, written successful grant applications, attended trainings within Tasmania and interstate, developed meeting skills including chairing meetings and writing minutes, represented young people at community meetings, sought the opinions of other young people, developed presentations, attended and reported to Council meetings and given service to their community etc. The group has grasped these opportunities for growth and development with both hands.

Since the group's inception some young people have moved on, as further academic education is only available to those who move out of the area. One of the original members of the group is about to enrol to do a Bachelor of Social Work – she would like my job – that's succession planning!

When asked to give feedback by SMS for this paper some responses were received from past and present members of the FEWCHA. The group was asked "What does the group mean to you?...

"It's a good way to keep up to date with what is going on in our community, and being able to have our say in up coming projects that may affect us. Organising events to keep young people amused is always good too because we know what they want. Yeah!"

"Invaluable life experience. Expand horizons and learn new skills. Meet new people. Was lots of fun."

"Empowerment of young people. Involvement in the community. Opportunity to exceed and excel."

"It's a chance to meet new people, experience new things and help out in the community."

"It allows me to have an opportunity to have a say in our community. It also gives us a chance to do what we want also to hold cool events for young people of our age."

"A chance to change things. Opportunity to better myself. A fun learning experience I can share with my peers."

"It's an opportunity for the youth of the area to be heard about issues that effect us. A chance to learn about leadership and sometimes keep us entertained in a constructive way."

"Creates links between young people and older citizens.

Contributes positively to the community.

Teacher young people life and leadership skills in the early stages of life.

Develops the four C's of creativity, confidence, co-operation and commitment.

Gives a broad range of experiences and opportunities for the young people in Dorset.

Is a support network of friends.

Is an opportunity to step out of our comfort zones and try new things, mix with new people and form new ideas.

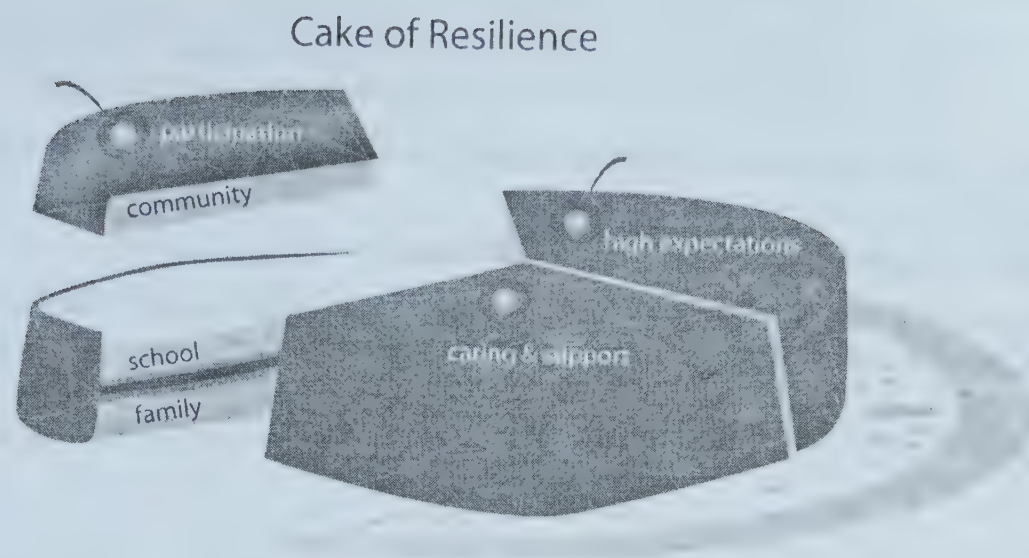
Gives you an insight to how organizations operate.

Motivates people!

Is a positive environment that motivates people (sometimes by the use of food!)."

Taking another look at the theory of Benard (1991), as illustrated here in Figure Three,





**Figure 3**

The focus of the development of resilience in the context of FEWCHA is the intersection of the “Community and Participation” section of Benard’s work. And as Benard states that, “The natural outcome of having high expectations for youth is the creation of opportunities for them to be contributing members of their community.”

Through FEWCHA’s activities we aim to tip the balance in favor of the positive. According to Werner, “The range of outcomes, is determined by the balance between risk factors, stressful life events, and protective factors (Werner and Smith, 1982 in Benard, 1991). Furthermore, this balance is not determined only on the basis of the number of risk and protective factors present in the life of an individual but on their respective frequency, duration, and severity, as well as the developmental stage at which they occur.

According to Werner then (1990), “As long as [this] balance between stressful life events and protective factors is favorable, successful adaptation is possible. However, when stressful life events outweigh the protective factors, even the most resilient child can develop problems”.

FEWCHA is shifting the balance by involving young people in participation on many levels within their community. Benard (1991) argues,

“Shifting the balance or tipping the scales from vulnerability to resilience may happen as a result of one person or one opportunity...individuals who succeeded in spite of adverse environmental conditions in the families, schools, and/or communities have often done so because of the presence of environmental support in the form of one family member, one teacher, one school, one community person that encouraged their success and welcomed their participation.”

So instead of looking at the underlying risk factors and “problems” that the young people of FEWCHA may have we instead spend our time focusing of developing resiliency in these young people that has and will continue to result in increased social capital within the whole community. There is hope!

## Research

As a consequence of this understanding from my practice and reading, I decided to enrol to do my Masters in Social Work by research. I began to conceptualize my ideas around youth and their community participation. As I began reading in this area I found evidence to support my current work practice as I have shown that youth participation does build resilience and social capital within young people and the communities that they belong to.

Putnam eloquently explores the habits of 20<sup>th</sup> century Americans and shows the decline in social connectedness between individuals and therefore social capital within American society. I’ve wonder if young people’s participation in FEWCHA and groups such as these for example, will lead to long term participation in their community? This long term participation could take several forms – secretary of the local hockey club, volunteer at play centre working bees, working for volunteers abroad, chairperson of the bowls club when they are 65. These questions will remain unanswered until members of this group grow older.



However, if it doesn't matter exactly what the actual activity that builds resilience – high expectations, caring and support or participation - and the sphere in which it occurs is flexible – family, school or community - then it must be possible to explore this idea by talking with adults in the community who are active community members and asking them about their experiences as young people.

My research question then becomes...Does community youth participation lead to active community participation in adult life?

I will keep you posted in regard to the answer!

So, the goal of my practice has become two fold...to empower young people to be the strength in the Dorset community and to build life long active community participation in young people. Therefore building greater systems of reciprocity and a community, and consequently a world with a stronger sense of connection and hope!

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# Use of Mathematical Theories in understanding the Affects of Policies and their role in Strengthening the Communities: Adaptation of Fisher Information Model

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Understanding the overall performance of strategy depends upon the consideration of the parameters of the system and the fluctuations they undergo. This paper proposes that such an understanding of systems behavior using classical physics is not adequate as the fluctuations are no longer remain linear. Hence the author presents an alternative method based on classical measurement theory originally propounded by Fisher. This paper is looking at the possibility of this application to social phenomena. For example- on the internal affects of a policy on the system (community or an organization) and its components (people in a community). Every component (entity/people) is being understood as an input signal from which data can be collected as an operation of measurement but each entity can influence the other entities output but applying peer-pressure which is common in communities. The net outcome from such analysis is a deeper understanding of the systems response to a input (here a policy or a event) and our results have shown that the influence a neighboring entity on its closest entities are far more effective than was predicted in classical studies.

## Introduction: -

Creating a good and healthy society has been the dream of many and has a long history starting from the age of early tribal leaders to today's international leaders. To please everyone in the society, understanding everyone's needs and doing what is best for all (or at least for most), one needs the knowledge of human behavior, which we have not found till now and this is rightly put as "*No man is an Island, but how exactly are we affected by the behavior of other? Are there 'Laws of Nature' that guide human affairs? Have we complete freedom in creating our societies, or are we trapped by 'Human Nature'? And how in human affairs, one thing leads to another?*" Scientists work on insensate things and yet through mathematics and physics make new technologies available for use and provide undeniable and unquestionable understanding of evolution and the structure of society.

However, this necessarily doesn't make mathematical-physics a candidate for understanding the societies intricate structure. Under lining all this is a more subtle and difficult question: does physics driven by abstract mathematical equations simply help us explain and understand, or can we apply to anticipate or predict outcomes from a society (organization or community) faced with a change of strategy. What we want to tell is that such physical rules can be applied in designing, managing and executing policies or strategies which can be helpful in making a better society for all of us to live. The basic aims of this paper are:

- To introduce the mechanistic view of a society and its elements.
- To give a feel of mathematical tools that can be used to analyse the society's features.
- To introduce one such specific tool called as 'Fisher Information Theory'.
- To introduce these models to policy or strategy makers in developing new policies.

## The History and nature of mechanistic view of Society and its influence on Socio-Physics:-

Before I venture any further into the realms of mathematics and physics of society, it is worth considering why such a road should be taken to understand the effect of strength based practices to be used in the societies or organizations, which mainly details with the human welfare issues their mutual interactions, their responses to a global policy and so on. It must be noted that the human decisions (actions) under any given situation are unpredictable because of its complexity and numerous parameters that effect these actions and cannot be predicted accurately. But when considering the collective behavior such accuracies can be obtained not in predicting the individual's behavioral pattern or response but their collective response.

At face value it is not obvious how the science of physics, which studies properties of insensate things, will provide significant insights about complex human behavioral patterns in societies and in organizations. Yet such theories have discovered that systems whose component parts have a capacity to act collectively often show recurrent features, even though they might seem to have nothing at all in common with one another [1,2]. Even with our woeful ignorance of why humans behave the way they do when they are in a particular situation, it is possible to make some predictions about how they behave collectively, like in a organization or in a group [3,4,5].



Policy makers use findings from anthropologists and sociologists for understanding the human needs and concerns in developing a new policy. The studies they rely are often historical and offer limited scope to predict futuristic impacts of the policy that is being made for the very future. Policy makers concern themselves with what they think ought to be, while scientists (those dealing with study of nature and its laws) concentrate on the way things are. Science seeks to find description of observed phenomena (be it insensate matter or social behavior), and to understand how that phenomena might arise from simple assumptions and constraints [5]. Equipped with scientific and philosophical understanding of such theories, one can ask, what we would need to do in order to obtain a different result? For example: what should be done to increase the productivity of workers, in a organization? What should be done to make community engagement of members more cooperative? etc). Such decisions about what is desirable should properly be in the realm of public debate as they no longer are scientific questions. In this sense, then science becomes as it should be – a servant and guide to human nature and not a dictator [5-8].

*Carolyn Merchant.* In her book '*The Death of Nature (1983)*', argues that the notion of mechanistic, atomistic philosophy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century sanctioned the manipulation and violations of nature that continue to blight the world today. She also adds to it, 'It is hard to believe or even imagine how any model human social encounter, which regards, the behavior of individuals as governed by rigid mathematical and physical rules can offer as a vision of a better way to live, rather than a night marish robotic life'. This is an overkill of science and does not take into account of success of physics and mathematics in explaining the complex behaviors of nature -living and nonliving. The mechanistic natural philosophy was to have a much more central role in society and culture than even the old Aristotelian natural philosophy did, because:

- the new mechanistic world-view promised power, progress and domination of nature;
  - it was of interest to states and rulers, and to those seeking to reform or modify existing social arrangements;
  - it didn't supplant religion, but took a more important role, along with religion in legitimating social reality and social change.
- Indeed, in a watered down 'headline' form, mechanical philosophy became the 'ideology' of modern science, down to the present day.

Name of the Philosopher	Time of living	Status
René Descartes	1596 - 1650	French Catholic
Thomas Hobbes	1588 - 1676	English Protestant
Pierre Gassendi	1592 - 1655	French Catholic Priest
Marin Mersenne	1588 - 1648	French Catholic Monk
Isaac Beekman	1588 - 1636	Dutch Protestant

Table 1: The Class of 1620 -- Creators of the Early Mechanistic Philosophy of Society[5,8].

What such priest –scientist and philosopher theorists proposed to do was to gain some understanding of how patterns of behaviour emerge, from the statistical blend of many individuals, pursuing their own idiosyncratic ways. Sometimes helping or swindling one another, cooperating or conflicting with each other. What do these models of societies inform us?: That in an interacting community collective actions and efforts are inevitable. No matter how eccentric and individualistic people behave, their actions are often the invisible details of a larger picture. This is not necessarily a description of powerlessness, but it is rather a picture of our interdependence on one another [9-12]. No scientific theory will show us how to build a paradise, but the search for a theory of social interactions will help us in making sure that we don't turn the society into a nightmare to live. Theories of such nature do not provide prescriptions but descriptions for our understanding that we might hope to make our choices and develop a clearer vision and for global good.

If you want to strengthen an organization or community, we should use the inherent properties or characteristics of the individuals that encompass their systems rather than trying to incorporate new value systems or new qualities into the system. But to use these characteristics we need to understand what those traits are, not individualised qualities but the qualities that manifest in the whole system i.e., the holistic view of the system. So, we begin local to end up global.

**History and Origin of Econophysics:**

Since the 1970s, a series of significant changes has taken place in the world of economics. During the past 30 years, physicists have achieved important results in the field of phase transitions, statistical mechanics, nonlinear dynamics, and disordered systems. In these fields, power laws, scaling, and unpredictable (stochastic or deterministic) time series are contained and the current interpretation of the underlying physics is often obtained using these concepts.



With this background in mind, it may surprise scholars trained in the natural sciences to learn that the first use of a power-law distribution (which are scale-free phenomena) and the first mathematical formalization of a random walk took place in the social sciences. At one time, it was imagined that the 'scale-free' phenomena are relevant to only a fairly narrow slice of physical phenomena [13]. However, the range of systems that apparently display power law and hence scale-invariant correlations has increased dramatically in recent years, ranging from base pair correlations in non-coding DNA [14,15], lung inflation [15,16] and inter-beat intervals of the human heart [17] to complex systems involving large numbers of interacting subunits that display 'free will', such as city growth [18,19], animal behavior [20], and even economics [21,22].

Could it be that somehow social systems push themselves up 'up to the limit' – just as a sand-pile is pushed to the limit before an avalanche starts, an image that has attracted recent attention in the debate between 'self-organized criticality' and 'plain old criticality' (see, e.g., Vespignani and Zapperi [23] and references therein)? For example, in economics every subunit plays according to rules and pushes itself up against the limits imposed by these rules. But social systems display a variety of rich forms of 'order', far richer than we anticipate from studies of ferromagnets and antiferromagnets (see, e.g., some of the papers appearing in Knobler et al. [24]). Could such orderings arise from the complex nature of the interactions? Or from the range of different 'sizes' of the constituent subunits as, e.g., one finds ordering in sand-piles when sand particles of two different grain sizes are dropped onto a heap – see, e.g., Refs. [23-27].

### Model and its description\*:

Fisher information is a physical intuitive concept, which is the measure of indeterminacy in a system. It has two basic roles to play. First, it is a measure of the ability to estimate a parameter of a given system or phenomenon. Second, it is a measure of the state of disorder of a system in statistical field of study and latter makes it a corner stone of physical theory.

Our model is based on a simple physical measurement theory design, which isn't derived from classical information theory, but from Fisher's Extreme Physical Information theory. If  $Y$  is an observed value (let it be an overall effect of the policy on one particular train of character), and  $\theta$  be the ideal value of such a trait, what we want to happen (like we want all the participants to be equally motivated or happy) is to reach this value. Now let  $X$  be the difference between these values (i.e.  $X = Y - \theta$ ). Let us suppose that  $P(X)$  and  $Q(X)$  are assumed to be evaluated at a time  $T$  of the event, where in  $P(X)$  and  $Q(X)$  are functions of  $X$ , which describe the observed variation in  $X$  perfectly.

It is worth noting when we implement policies or plans and we expect  $\theta$ , but our result is  $Y$  instead. What could be the causes that lead to such discrepancies that we end up with  $Y$ ? This disparity is due to a wide range of causes.

- a) Participatory nature
- b) Ineffective policies
- c) Non-universality of rules
- d) Uncontrollable motional effects....etc.

$Y = \theta + X$  is the basic physical measurement event. Now we know the causes of the disparity but they take up so much of random space that we would call them as (human) noise.(s) And it is this noise(s) we are interested in.

Now consider  $Y$  to be a direct indication of a particular policy's effectiveness. By definition, the function  $P(X)$  is a random function, hence can be approximated (sometimes accurately represented also) by a Probability Density Function (PDF), which governs the ensemble of such events of measurement of  $Y$ 's value under repeated initial conditions. Our concern is with how to evaluate  $P(X)$  so that we can predict the behavior of  $Y$ .

It is emphasized that we are interested in seeking the estimates of the  $P(X)$ , rather than exact answers for  $P(X)$ . The answer to problems of this kind depends intimately upon the nature of their constraints. However, the types of data that are used to define the PDF's for our problem are largely selected arbitrarily, ultimately out of our convenience, thus results are likewise arbitrary, concluding that the output PDF is by and large a manmade constructions. Hence it cannot be an absolute answer, but even societies are manmade and bear in mind that, we are seeking an estimation or approximation and not a physical universal laws.

These effects have a direct complement in sociology, giving rise to the famous dilemma of choosing between a 'fundamentalist' and a 'technical' approach to estimation of societal parameters. Since the output PDF's of valuation are but estimates, by what measure of quality can each be judged? As mentioned above, it is generally felt that a candidate PDF should be minimally biased, i.e., maximally smooth (by what ever measure) is taken to be the main measure of quality. As  $Y$  denotes the intrinsic datum, i.e., a way of defining intrinsic fluctuations in  $X$ . The data or effects are here valuation denoted by  $D_m$ . These depend upon  $P(X)$ , through relations,

$$D_m = \text{integral of } [dx * F_m(X) * P(X)], \text{ where } m = 1, \dots, M.$$

Where,  $D_m$  is the macroscopic effect of the policy,  $Y$  is the microscopic effect on each individual,  $F_m$  is the kernel functions custom built for a problem.



In all such applications, the activity of getting the data plays a vital role in initiating the EPI approach, which is the case here as well. The execution and effect of the policy of the given event during the time interval  $(t, t+dt)$  necessarily affects the PDF  $P(X)$  on its valuation. Since the interval is very short, the result is a perturbation of  $P(X)$ . Therefore information  $I$  (Fisher Information) and  $J$  are perturbed, where  $J$  describes, the physical phenomenon and embody all the constraints that are imposed by the physical phenomena under measurement. Figure 2 gives the basic steps followed in this approach.

If the details of the integration and numerical analysis is told here, the paper would become inaccessible to general public (for example, you need not know the individual components and its structure in a computer to use it and we believe that some things are better kept hidden, for if they know it they no longer appreciate the simplicity of it). I took the problem of understanding the inclination of people towards any arbitrary policy which gives them a factor of advantage over the others.

The results can be summarized by figure 1.

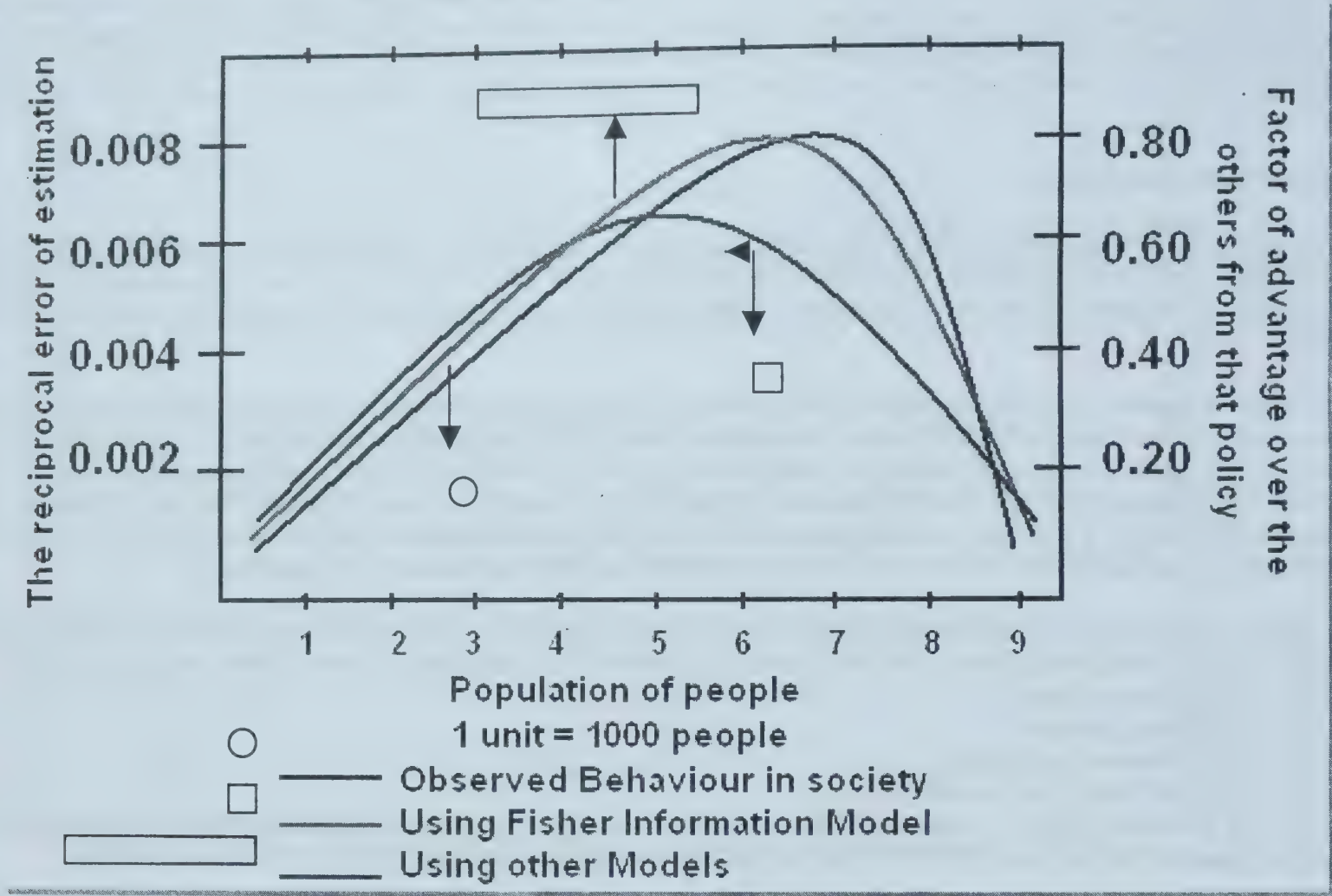


Figure 1: Flow chart diagram of EPI approach

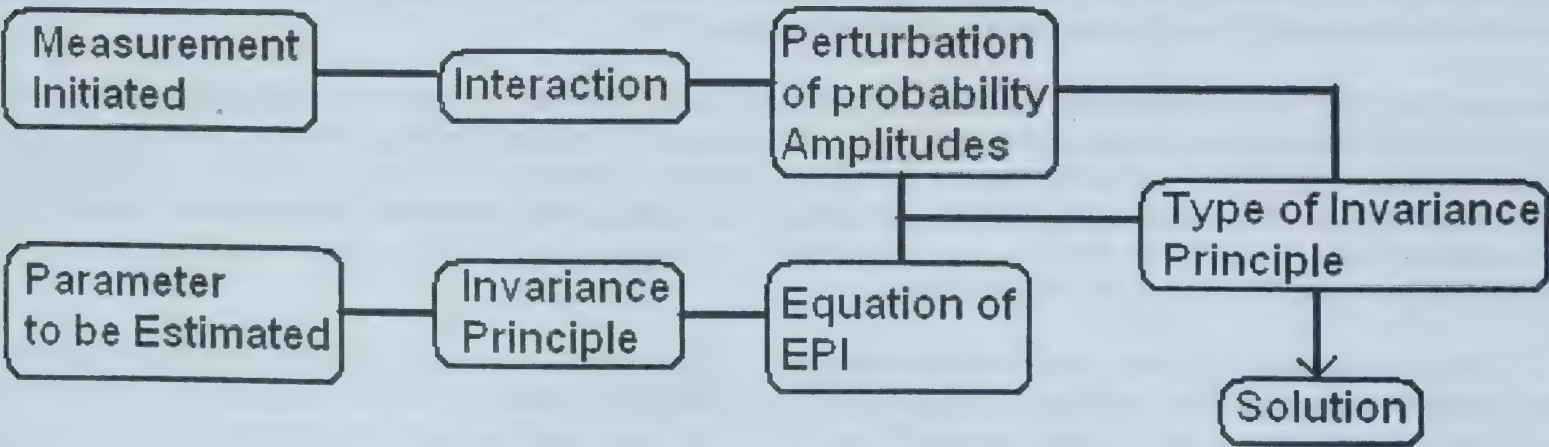


Figure 2: Flow chart diagram of EPI approach

### Results and conclusions:

When observation are limited – as they often are in sociological data applications, other approaches such as smooth maximum entropy, minimum fisher information, often require strong prior knowledge, in the form of a critically chosen



density function  $P(X)$ , where as Fisher information theory simply imposes a continuity constraints. Using these approaches, one can deploy well-developed computational approaches from formally identical problems in community sciences. A key benefit of such approaches from the point view of mathematicians is that the output PDF's and resulting observables, i.e., the global effects have a degree of smoothness that one expects in a good estimation. By comparison, such approach is always expressed in mathematical terms (differential and integral equation on  $P(X)$ ).

The aim of the approach is to place all or nearly all heterogeneous sociology agents within one stochastic and description of social dynamics that is provided by equation derived from mathematical abstractness. The real motive of this work is not to tell about a branch of some unknown physical theory and its connection with the social statistics (which can be a pure coincidence), but to tell that, physics can be helpful in some way to workers of society to help the society in a better way. The numerical results presented are based on an imaginary event or policy as such and hence can be used in any situation (suitably modified to fit the issue) and that is the beauty of the approach. There are questions that concern both the mathematicians and social workers, but they define it in different ways (like finding best solution to a social worker will be a solution acceptable to all while the same problem is defined as finding optimal solution with constraints) and these are the questions I would be delighted to discuss with any of the conference participants.

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# Motivational Interviewing for Social Work: Motivation, Change Talk & Positive Outcomes

Michael D. Clark, MSW<sup>1</sup>

Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 1991) is a way of talking with people about change that was first developed for the field of addictions but has broadened and become a favored approach for use with a wide variety of populations in many different settings (Burke, Arkowitz & Dunn, 2002). It is in kinship with the Strength-based approach which has been transitioned to child protective services (Turnell & Edwards, 1999), Child Welfare (Berg & Kelly, 2000) and case management efforts with youth and families (Clark, 2001). This article will suggest several benefits for the importation of Motivational Interviewing into Social Work practice.

This article posits seven reasons to consider the Motivational Interviewing approach:

## *Why would Social Work staff want to use Motivational Interviewing in their day-to-day work?*

1. It can help Social Work staff get back into the "business of behavior change."
2. It suggests effective tools for handling resistance and can keep difficult situations from getting worse.
3. It keeps the staff from doing all the work, and makes interactions more change-focused.

Interactions are more change-focused when the staff understands where change comes from. Change-focused interactions place the responsibility for behavior change on the client. Motivational interactions create an appetite for change in parents by amplifying their ambivalence.

4. Motivational Interviewing will change who does the talking.
5. This approach will help prepare clients for change.

Ask questions that raise interest.

6. Motivational Interviewing changes what is talked about.

Eliciting "change talk" (self-motivational speech).

7. Agency staff can enforce court orders and deliver sanctions without leaving a motivational style.

Lying and deception

Addressing violations and sanctions

## **1. It Can Help Staff Get "Back Into The Game" Of Behavior Change**

Historically, motivation has been viewed as a more-or-less fixed characteristic of clients. That is, a parent usually presented to a NGO agency with a certain motivational "profile" and until they were ready to make changes, there was not much you could do to influence his chances. Under this model, the social work staff becomes an enforcer of the court's orders or the agency rules and regulations, but not necessarily an active participant in the behavior change of the client. One staff described his role:

The parents (defendant), in consultation with their lawyer, negotiates for the consideration of case management services (and conditions) in lieu of more extreme measures (child removal or continuation of foster care, etc). In our initial meeting, and throughout our work together, I tell the parents what is expected of them and make it clear what the penalties will be should they fail to comply. We have regular meetings to verify that they are making progress on his conditions and I answer any questions they might have. If the parents do not comply with court orders or show poor progress on their conditions, I see to it that the court is notified and appropriate sanctions are assessed. Throughout the process, the mandated client is well aware of the behavior that might end up with child removal (or a continuation of out-of-home placement), and if more extreme measures end up occurring, it was their own behavior that got them to that point.



Reflected in this statement is a staff person who is essentially cut out of the change process, except as an observer. However, recent evidence suggests there may be quite a lot that a staff can do to influence a family's chances of successfully completing Social Work programming. Motivational Interviewing places staff back in the "business of behavior change."

## **2. It Suggests Effective Tools For Handling Resistance And Can Keep Difficult Situations From Getting Worse**

Since motivation has been viewed more like a fixed client trait, it has been thought that if clients enter Social Work departments displaying little motivation, then the best strategy is to attempt to break through the parent's denial, rationalization, and excuses.

You got a problem.

You have to change.

You better change or else!

Space prohibits a review of the many studies (Miller & Rollnick, 2002; Hubble, Duncan & Miller, 1999) that find a confrontational counseling style limits effectiveness. One such study (Miller, Benefield and Tonnigan, 1993) is telling. This study found that a directive-confrontational counseling style produced twice the resistance, and only half as many "positive" client behaviors as did a supportive, client-centered approach. The researchers concluded that *the more staff confronted substance-involved clients, the more the clients drank at twelve-month follow up*. Problems are compounded as a confrontational style not only pushes success away, but can actually make matters worse. Although many staff rightly object, "We're Social Work staff, we're not therapists!—our job is to protect children and enforce the orders of the court," this claim only serves to highlight the need for strategies to help staff get back in the game of behavior change.

Other staff shy away from a heavy-handed approach, using instead a logical approach that employs advice or reasoning.

Why don't you just...

Do you know what this behavior is doing to you?

Here's how you should go about this...

Unfortunately, both of these approaches can end up decreasing motivation. When these methods fail to begin behavior change, staffs will ramp up their energy and begin to push—only to find the client pushes back. Staff escalates the confrontation or reasoning, only to find the client has escalated as well. Locking horns creates a frustrating spiral that satisfies neither. Research finds that when we push for change, the typical client response is to defend the problem behavior.

"You've got a problem" / "No, I don't"

"Why don't you...." / "That won't work for me"

"You better change or else!" / "Take your best shot!"

We clearly don't want to create a situation where the client is only defending the "don't change" side of the equation. Part of the equation involves using known techniques to draw out more positive talk, while the other part of the equation is having a collaborative style where clients feel more comfortable talking about change. For instance, research suggests that characteristics of the staff person—even in a brief interaction—can determine the motivation, and subsequent outcome, of the client.

It is important to remember that there is no set personality style for a Social Work client. They are all different as they enter our agencies and offices—dissimilar experiences, situations, values and temperaments. Consider the colleague who offices next to you. If all you might hear from clients visiting this neighboring office would consist of arguing, resistance and conflict, then the sensible conclusion would be this discord is not due to the clients. Since all clients are different, for a majority of client to show a certain behavior (resistance) then it would have to be the result of this staff members style of approach.

## **3. It Keeps Staff From Doing All The Work, And Makes Interactions More Change-Focused**

***Interactions are more change-focused when the staff understands where change comes from***

Staff trained in Motivational Interviewing can turn away from a confrontational style or logic-based approaches as they become knowledgeable of the process of behavior change. Many in Social Work and NGO services believe that what causes change are the services provided to the client, whether that involves treatment, the threat of punishment, advice, education or "watching them" and monitoring their activities. These conditions and services represent only part of the picture—and not necessarily the most important part. Research finds



that long-term change is more likely to occur for *intrinsic* reasons (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Often the things that we assume would be motivating to the client simply aren't. Thus, motivation is, in part, a process of finding out what things are valued and reinforcing to the individual Social Work client.

***Change-focused interactions place the responsibility for behavior change on the client.***

We use an attractive (and accurate) phrase when training the Motivational Interviewing approach, "When Motivational Interviewing is done correctly it is the client who voices the arguments for change." So, how does the staff do this? The first step in getting the client thinking and talking about change is by establishing an empathic and collaborative relationship. Staff can watch and listen to find out what the person values and if their current behavior is in conflict with these deeply-held values. Motivational Interviewing calls our attention to this key idea:

It is discrepancy that underlies the perceived importance of change: no discrepancy, no motivation. The discrepancy is generally between present status and a desired goal, between what is happening and how one would want things to be (one's dreams, hopes or goals).

If there is a rift between what one values and current behavior, this gap is called "discrepancy." It is within this gap that the building materials will be found for amplifying *the client's own reasons for change*. When working with a parent who see no problem with their harmful or neglecting behavior, it is essential that staff have the skills to create an "appetite" for change. Creating this appetite for change involves creating ambivalence. Summoning ambivalence is a central skill set in Motivational Interviewing.

***Motivational interactions create an appetite for change in clients by amplifying their ambivalence.***

Motivational Interviewing assumes a certain degree of client ambivalence (I should change, but I don't want to). They literally feel two ways about the problem. To consider the Stage of Change theory (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983) some Social Work clients will enter our agencies in the precontemplation stage, seeing their problem behavior as "no problem at all." A few more enter agency services in the preparation or action stage, having acknowledged the problem during the first appointment and needing only minimal assistance to begin change efforts. Throughout this process, ambivalence is an internal battle between "I want to do this very much, but I know that I really shouldn't." This pull in two directions generally lies at the heart of compulsive, excessive behavior. The majority of parents already have both arguments within them—a side that wants to be rid of the problem (pro change), and a side that doesn't believe change is possible or beneficial (stay the same).

Staff have long been taught to see ambivalence as a classic form of "denial." When court jurisdiction is at hand or should the person be facing sanctions or loss of parental autonomy, it's easy to wonder how a client could possibly think that the problem behavior remains an option. However, for the motivationally-aware staff person, ambivalence is welcomed as it demonstrates a reason for optimism! Rather than being a sign that a person is moving away from change, ambivalence is a signal that change may well be on the horizon. These staff understand that *ambivalence makes change possible—it is the precursor to positive behavior change*.

Clients can change if they can successfully negotiate their ambivalence. The challenge therefore, is to first identify and increase this ambivalence, and then try to resolve it by creating discrepancy between the actual present and the desired future. The larger the discrepancy, the greater the desire to change. There will be a very small percentage of clients who have no discrepancy or ambivalence over their current behavior—and no amount of strategies can create it where there is none to start with. However, the good news for Social Work staff is that a large majority of parents will enter our departments with a certain amount of concern regarding their behavior. Whether the discrepancy can be harnessed for change depends on whether an staff understands how to recognize it—and use it—to elicit self-motivational speech.

#### **4. Motivational Interviewing Will Change Who Does the Talking**

Training in Motivational Interviewing teaches techniques to strategically steer a conversation in a particular direction—yet steering in itself is worthless without the ability to move the conversation forward. Consider how client welfare staff often work much harder than their clients do. As part of a qualitative research project, this author (Clark, 2005) videotaped actual office appointments between agency staff and their assigned clients. This research found that in office visits averaging 15 minutes in length, staff "out-talk" clients by a large margin. For instance, in one session, 2,768 words were spoken between staff and client. The breakdown? The staff spoke a hefty 2,087 words out of this total while the client was allowed only 681 words. Another example demonstrates slightly less talking overall but the ratio of "talk-time" remained similar. Total number of words spoken in this interview was 1,740. The word count found the staff spoke a robust 1,236 words while



the client was limited to 504. Although listening by itself is no guarantee of behavior change, using strategies to get the client talking, is a prerequisite to being an effective motivational interviewer.

In interactions like this, agency staff are literally talking themselves out of effectiveness. The problem is not so much that the staff is doing all the talking, but rather that *the client is not*. It stands to reason that the more the staff is talking, the less opportunity there is for the parent to talk and think about change. Compliance can occur *without* the staff listening and the client feeling understood—the same cannot be said if one wants to induce behavior change.

### 5. This Approach Will Help You Prepare Clients for Change

When you get the client talking, staff are taught to strategically focus on encouraging productive talk. Frequently, social workers want to jump straight to problem solving. However, this approach ignores the fact that most people need to be prepared for change. Getting clients to do most of the talking is the first step, followed by preparing people to think about change. Motivational Interviewing trains staff in basic listening and speaking strategies:

- Ask Open Questions
- Affirm Positive Talk and Behavior
- Reflect What You are Hearing or Seeing
- Summarize What has Been Said

These four techniques (sometimes referred to by the “OARS” acronym, for Open Questions, Affirmation, Reflections, and Summaries) will help a parent think about change, and help to gather better quality information so we can assist the person in planning. In some instances, we don't need clients to talk much, especially when staffs are simply gathering information or documenting compliance. But in other instances, when staff are focused on behavior change, the use of OARS will increase the probability that the parent will speak—and think—in a more productive direction. These techniques become a “gas peddle” for conversations.

Figure 1 illustrates some of the markers that help to determine whether the interaction is a good one, that is, whether the Social Work client is moving closer towards change.

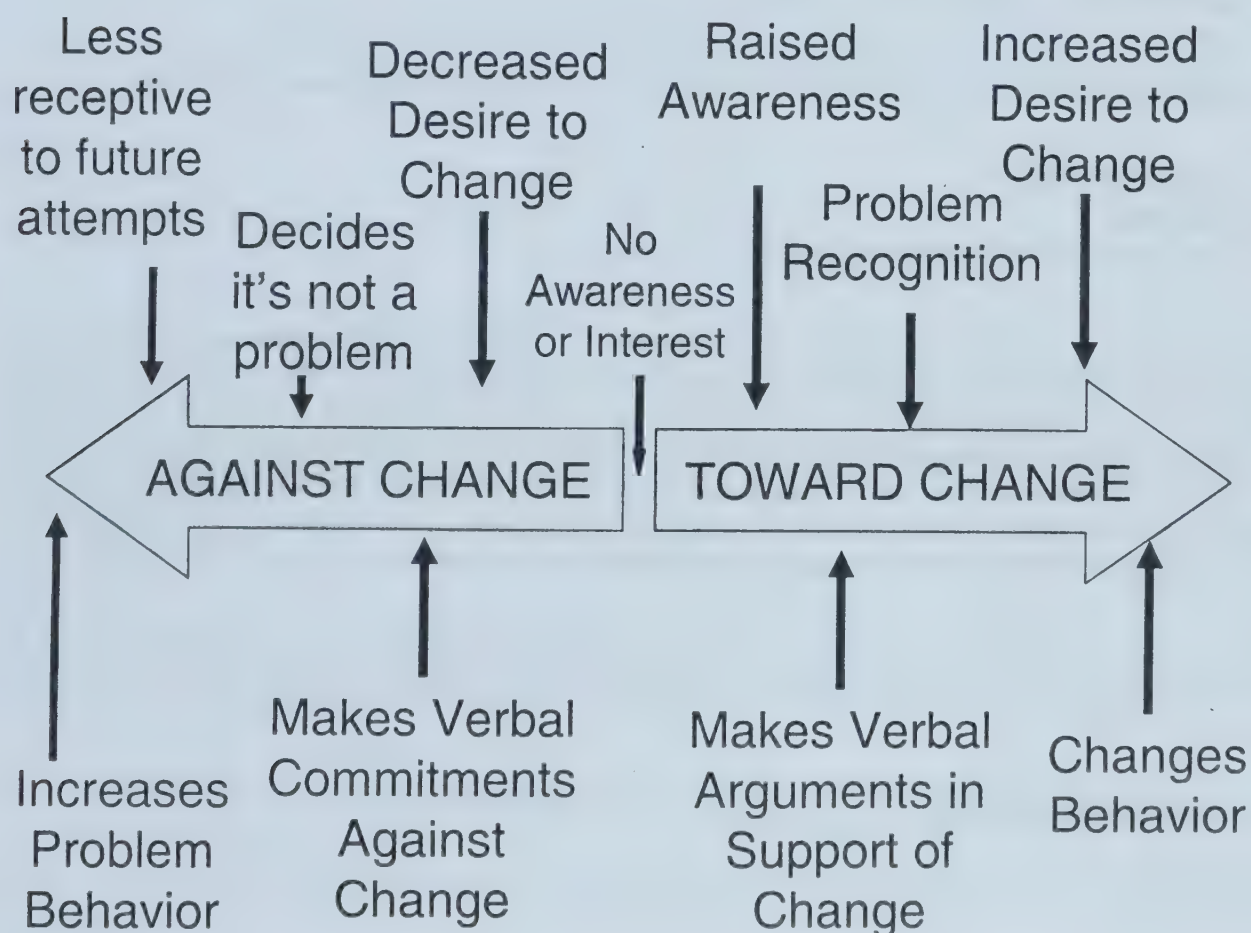


Figure 1.



## Ask Questions that Raise Interest

Open questions can also be used to help a person resolve their ambivalence in a more positive direction. They help tip the balance toward change. For instance, here are some questions that ask specifically about the client's reasons for change:

### Drawbacks of Current Behavior

- What concerns do you have about your drug use?
- What concerns does your spouse have about your drug use?
- What has your drug use cost you?

### Benefits of Change

- If you went ahead and took care of that class, how would that make things better for you?
- You talk a lot about your family. How would finding a job benefit your family?
- How would that make things better for your kids?

Here are some questions that ask about desire to change:

- How badly do you want that?
- How does that make you feel?
- How would that make you feel differently?

Here are some questions that ask about perceived ability to change:

- How would you do that if you wanted to?
- What would that take?
- If you did decide to change, what makes you think you could do it?

Finally, here are some questions that ask about specific commitments the client will make to change:

- How are you going to do that?
- What will that look like?
- How are you going to make sure that happens?

Since our questions partially determine the client's responses, we pick questions that encourage more productive talk. When talking about matters of fact, this might be considered leading, but when talking about motivation we assume that every client has some mixed feelings. The outcome is not fixed, and so we provide every opportunity for clients to talk and think about positive behavior change. Ideally, this becomes a reinforcing process: We ask questions to evoke change talk, the parent responds with positive statements, we reflect and reinforce what the client has said, and the parent continues to elaborate. With Motivational Interviewing, change talk stays front and center through amplification and reflection.

Another benefit from the use of OARS is evident in how it can move troublesome conversations back to productive ends. Unfortunately, a great majority of the responses typically used by Social Work staff tend to make bad situations worse:

Parent: You're trying to say I'm a bad parent!

Staff: No, that's not what I said.

Parent: You don't think I can protect my kids.

Staff: You're not listening!



Parent: This isn't fair.

Staff: Mrs. Jones, your arguing is not helping.

Initially listening to and trying to understand a client's anger with reflective listening skills will lower frustration levels and make future conversations more productive. Understanding a client's point of view is not the same as agreeing with it. It takes two people to argue—it is impossible to fight alone. As any argument must involve two people, the motivationally-inclined staff—using OARS—simply takes him or herself out of the mix. An angry and combative attitude can often be reduced by simply reflecting back to the client what they are feeling or thinking. The focus should not rest between the staff and the Social Work client (force and coercion) but rather between the Social Work client and their own issues (discrepancy and ambivalence). Even in the face of pending violations of court orders, the staff member must remove themselves from the middle and not let the lack of cooperation become personal. A motivational focus does not rest between the staff and parent, but between the parent and the pending sanction. Staff are trained to “get out of the middle” and position the parent and pending sanction face-to-face. (More on this in Section 7 regarding “delivering sanctions without leaving a motivational style.”)

#### 6. Motivational Interviewing Will Change What Is Talked About.

There is good evidence to suggest that people can literally “talk themselves in and out of change” (Walters, et al., 2003). For instance, there are linguistic studies that suggest that the speech of the provider sets the tone for the speech of the client, which in turn, influences the ultimate outcome (Amrhein, et. al., 2003). In short, certain statements and questions—and especially a certain provider style—seem to predict whether people decide to change during brief conversations. Parents may come in with a certain range of readiness, but what the staff says from that point on makes a difference in how the Social Work client speaks and thinks, and ultimately in how they choose to behave.

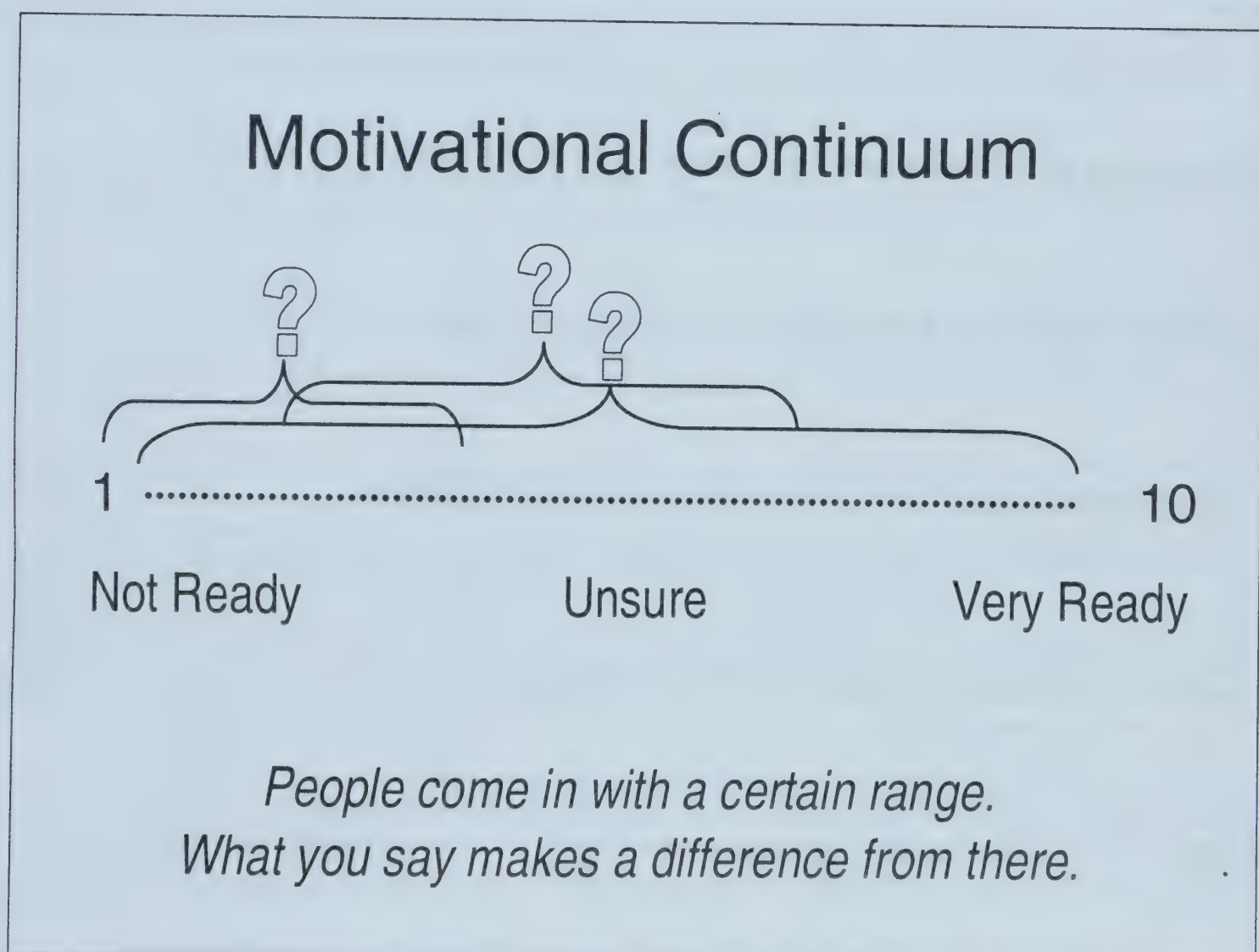


Figure 2



Eliciting “change talk” (self-motivational speech)

There has been an increasing interest in short Motivational Interviewing sessions that have been able to match the improvement of several months of outpatient work. As a result, linguists (Amrhein, et. al., 2003) began to study the speech content of these motivational sessions--the actual words spoken between a staff person and their client—looking for what speech content proved to determine positive behavior change. What they found were five categories of motivational speech—desire, ability, reason, need and commitment language. These conditions have been placed in an easy-to-remember acronym of “DARN-C”:

D esire (I Want to, prefer, wish)

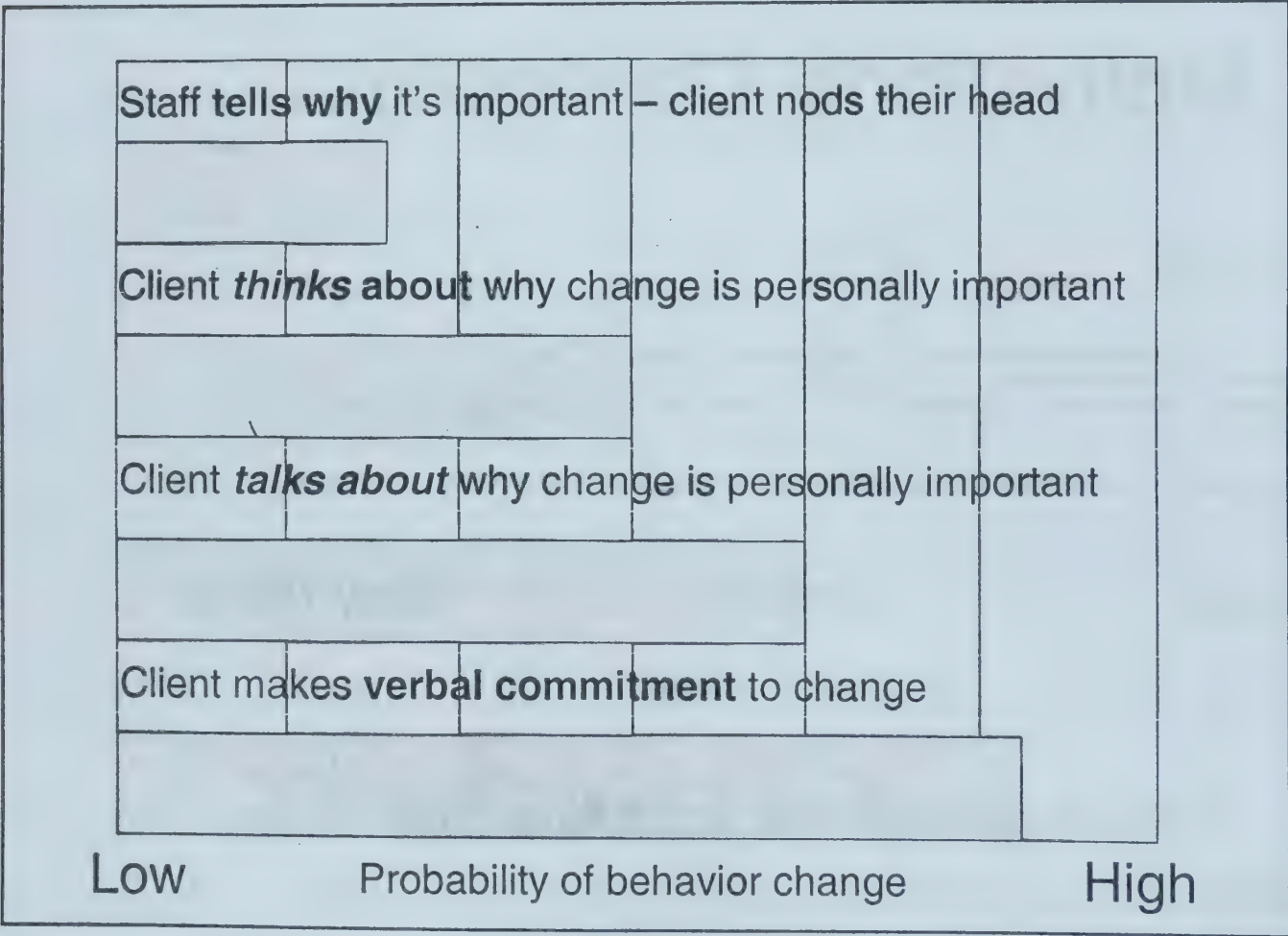
A bility (I Can, able, could, possible)

R easons (I Should, why do it?)

N eed (I Must, importance, got to)

C ommittment (I Will, I’m going to...)

The researchers were quick to point out that not every dimension had to be voiced for behavior change to start. Simply getting the client to verbalize one of the four constructs (DARN) might be enough. However, the same could not be said for Commitment. It was Commitment talk that actually predicted behavior change. For this reason, staff should be aware of techniques to help increase motivational talk in a general sense—especially navigating conversations towards commitment language. Staff are reminded that when they are arguing or reasoning with the client, the true setback is that no DARN-C talk is occurring. Figure 3 highlights that the content of speech is important—and provides a visual demonstration that motivational talk is progressive.



7. Agency Staff Can Enforce Court Orders And Deliver Sanctions Without Leaving A Motivational Style

Figure 3



## Lying and Deception

One troublesome feature of both protective services and Social Work is the presence of deception, whether by deliberate lies, half-truths or "holding back" of information. In response to violations of court orders or lack of progress, clients sometimes lie ("I didn't do it!") or make excuses for behavior ("I did it but it's not so bad"). The range seems endless: "Everybody does it" (consensus), "It's not that bad" (minimization), "I needed the money" (justification), or "I didn't mean to" (intention). With the coercion inherent in court jurisdiction, it is reasonable to expect deception from a certain percentage of those with whom we work. At the same time, it is important to understand that most clients don't routinely lie. In contrast to the stereotype of clients as "deviants" who habitually manipulate others, most clients bend the truth for pretty ordinary reasons. In fact, to some extent, lying, deception and falsehood—the hiding of our inner selves or outer behavior—is simply part of our social world. As with honesty, lying is one more natural continuum of human behavior. No different from other human conditions, it is not so much the presence or absence of dishonesty but the degree or amount that becomes a concern.

Why do people lie? Research (Saarni & Lewis, 1993) suggests that people need to keep the integrity of two assumptions about their own actions. The first involves the belief "I'm a good person" while the second assumes "I am in control most of the time." Believing in these two assumptions is critical for maintaining a healthy psyche—these beliefs both protect and enhance our mental health. These assumptions also mean that we may guard ourselves or speak in a way that protects these assumptions. For instance:

1. A person will lie to "save face."

To save face is to protect a positive self-image—the beliefs that "I am a good person" and "I'm in control."

2. A person will lie to save face for someone he or she cares about.

Relationships are powerful motivators. This explains why abused children may lie to a protective services worker to protect their parent(s) and why one spouse cannot be compelled to testify against the other in a court of law. It creates a conflict to have to provide damaging information about someone with whom you have a close relationship.

3. A person will lie to protect a perceived loss of freedom or resources.

There are penalties for admitting child abuse/neglect behavior, and so clients must weigh the immediate penalties of telling the truth against the possibly worse, but less certain, penalties that might occur if they told a lie.

Any or all of these influences might be present—at any time—as a case progresses through a court/Social Work agency system. Clients constantly weigh their obligations to personal pride, important relationships, or the threat of a loss of freedom—all of this against what is expected of them.

What can be done about it?

First, the adage, "Don't take it personal" is appropriate here. Taking full responsibility for poor outcomes can conflict with anyone's perceptions of themselves as a "good" person and "in control." Many clients will deceive, not so much to con staff as to defend these assumptions within themselves—it involves a need for self-deception.

Second, a person will bend information in response to who is asking and how the question is being asked. The way a staff asks a question partially determines what kind of answer the client gives. Said more strongly, some staff members can actually encourage lies through their use of confrontational questions. Some staffs believe that a tough style sends a message to the client that he or she can't be "taken in" by clients, but research suggests it's more the opposite. A harsh, coercive style can prompt a paradoxical response, where the more the staff person confronts, the more a client feels like he has to lie to stay in control or save face. Lying becomes justified based on the personal style of staff. Rather than evoking change, a confrontive personal style can leave a client more entrenched in the problem, because it causes him to defend and make excuses for negative behavior.

Third, the Social Work field has long valued the ability to recognize deception and force the truth from clients. As with any other profession, no one wants to be played upon, suckered or conned. Yet, trying to force people to admit their faults is exhausting work. In contrast, staff who have a positive, collaborative relationship with their Social Work clients find that they are less likely to be lied to. A mutual working style makes honesty more likely.

A motivational approach doesn't handle deception by ignoring it, nor by getting agitated by it, but rather by taking a step back from the debate. In our view, we leave the assignment of responsibility (guilt or innocence) to the courts. In field work, we focus on accountability—but we strongly emphasize a "difference that makes a



difference"—that is, helping the client to become accountable for the solution, rather than the (outcome-killing) effort of becoming accountable for the problem.

#### Addressing Violations and Sanctions

One of the things that make Social Work staff unique is their conspicuously dual role. We help the parent to plan, but dispense sanctions if they fail. We ask for honesty, but also report all they tell us to the court. Indeed, it is understandable why some staff have a hard time navigating this dual role. The tendency is to move to one side—to become too harsh or too friendly—when a more middle-of-the-road approach is called for. In reality, the Social Work professional is more like consultant or mediator, in that we manage the relationship between court and client. This is not as far-fetched as some would believe. In truth, we neither make decisions for the client nor for the court. If we treat the position from the perspective of a mediator, we can avoid some of the pitfalls inherent in this dual role. Adopting this middle-of-the-road stance makes us not only an effective advocate for the court, but also allows us greater power to influence the actions of the mandated parent.

Motivational Interviewing can make change more likely, but it is by no means a magic bullet. When violations occur, there are a couple of strategies for keeping a motivational edge.

#### 1. Explain your dual roles (Become the "go-between")

Motivational Interviewing encourages staff to be honest with clients about all aspects of their services, including conditions, incentives, and sanctions. Staff should fully explain (up front) to the client about their dual role—yet do so as someone who represents "both sides." For instance:

I want to make you aware that I have a couple roles here. One of them is to be the court's representative, and to report on your progress on the conditions that the court has set. At the same time, I act as a representative for you, to help keep the court off your back and manage these conditions, while possibly making some other positive steps for you and your family along the way. I'll act as a "go-between"—that is, between you and the court, but ultimately you're the one who makes the choices. How does that sound? Is there anything I need to know before proceeding?

#### 2. Address Behavior with an "Even Keel" Attitude

Adopting a new approach like Motivational Interviewing is clearly a process. Even after an initial training, there is a common pitfall for many staff when compliance problems occur. At some point, if a Social Work client remains ambivalent (e.g., lack of progress), staff believe it makes sense to move out of a motivational style and switch over to more coercive and demanding strategies. Staff who initially found the benefits of motivational work will justify heavy-handed tactics—perceiving them to be a natural response to resistance, even remarking that difficult clients seem to be "asking for it." A critical idea missed—there is a difference between enforcing sanctions based on lack of progress, and switching styles to a more heavy handed approach. One can enforce court orders and assess sanctions as appropriate, without leaving motivational strategies behind.

Force, for all its bluster, can often make a situation worse. This is especially true when addressing violations. Clients may already be on the defensive about their progress, and an agitated staff can make the client's attitude worse. For this reason, we suggest that staff address violations with an "even keel" attitude, addressing the behavior, dispensing the appropriate sanction, but not getting agitated or taking the lack of compliance personally.

Motivationally-inclined staff offer their support—and their regrets—to the Social Work client who might be considering a violation of court orders:

Staff: We've talked about this before. In another two weeks, you will be in violation of this court order. We have also talked about how it is up to you. You can certainly ignore this order but sanctions will be assessed.

Parent: "Darn right I can I can ignore it—this is so stupid!"

Staff: "It seems unfair that you're required to complete this condition. It feels to you like it might be a waste of your time."

Parent: "Yeah. I can't believe I have to do this!"



Staff: "It's important that I tell you that my (supervisor, judge, responsibilities, policy, position) will demand that I assess a consequence if it's not completed before the next two weeks."

Parent: "You don't have to report this."

Staff: "Unfortunately, that's part of my job. I have to follow orders here. So, this will be something I'll have to do."

Social Work client: "You mean you can't just let it go?"

Staff: "No, I don't have a choice. But—you have a choice, even if I don't. Is there anything we can do to help you avoid these consequences before the end of the month (next meeting, court hearing)?"

Parent: "I'll think about it, it just seems unfair."

A confrontational approach is always an option, but at this point simply recognizing the client's reluctance, and fairly informing him or her about what is likely to happen, can improve the likelihood that a decision for compliance will eventually overtake the emotions of the moment.

In this example, the staff refuses to leave the middle, neither defending the court's order, nor siding with the client to stop the sanction. When it comes to the specific sanction, the staff defers to the court, and re-emphasizes a collaborative relationship: "How do we (you, significant others and myself) keep them (the judge, the court, agency policy) off your back?" Finally, the staff emphasizes the client's personal responsibility. Clients don't have to complete their conditions; they always have the option of taking the sanction.

Motivational Interviewing steers clear of both the hard and soft approaches. The "hard" approach is overly-directive and defends the court's authority ("You better do this!", "Drop the attitude, you're the one who didn't parent appropriately," "Don't blame the court"). Less examined is the "soft" approach. This approach leaves the staff defending the Social Work client, ("I won't tell this time—but don't do it again," "Do you know what the court would do if I brought this to their attention?"). A positive alliance is not the same as ignoring violations to keep a good relationship at any cost ("You better get it together or I'll have to do something"), nor is it the same as allowing the situation to become personal and attempting to "out-tough" the client ("I'll make sure your case never gets dismissed!"). Both approaches miss the mark as they prevent the staff from occupying the "middle ground."

A motivational approach is about finding the middle ground of a consultant who works with both sides (the court and the parent). Staff can work in partnership with the client, while still being true to their agency/court roles. Staff can respect personal choice, but not always approve of the client's poor parenting. By their skills and strategies, motivationally-trained staff can supervise for compliance and, at the same time, increase readiness for change.

#### Postscript

Start your own single-subject research by asking any Social Work supervisor to offer a frank (but discreet) evaluation of the department/agency staff they supervise. Many supervisors can easily walk down their hallways—and with candor—point to the offices of staff who have the ability to build helpful alliances with parents without compromising agency or court mandates. These staff members seem to understand that compliance and behavior change are not mutually exclusive efforts. With an eye to effective relationships that are so essential for encouraging change, why are not more Social Work departments importing motivational training to improve positive outcomes?

As noted, there is an abundance of research citing how a confrontational approach repels those we work with and becomes an obstacle for change. Social Work departments must speed-up this "retooling of practice methods" by establishing a climate that will both ensure compliance and foster hoped-for behavior change.



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# Strengthening Communities through Community Health Impact Assessment

Sebanti Ghosh, Colleen Cameroon

*This paper discusses how the Association for Social and Health Advancement (ASHA), in collaboration with the Coady International Institute, used the PATH (People Assessing Their Health) Process to increase the capacity of a tribal community in Mukutmanipur, West Bengal as they embark on Endogenous Tourism Project a joint initiative of UNDP and Government of India (Ministry of Tourism). Established in 1959 the Coady institute is world-renowned as a centre of excellence in community based development. As this is a work in progress, long-term outcomes are not available. The paper presents the findings from May 2006 to September 2006.*

## Background information

The Project on Endogenous Tourism is part of a growing Government of India and UNDP partnership to promote new and innovative approaches to building livelihood opportunities through community action. This project will promote experimentation and exploration to develop alternative models in rural tourism. Thirty-six sites across the country have been identified with a view to developing a range of models in 'endogenous tourism'. The project will forge strong community-private sector partnerships and will bring together on a common platform a host of players such as local communities, artisans, local and state authorities, NGOs and private entrepreneurs.

ASHA is one of the 36 NGOs chosen from around the country to work with the local community and provide the 'software' for this project at the selected sites. ASHA is a non-profit, non-political, non-governmental organization which, since inception in 1997 (registered in 1998) has been working to improve the socio-economic and health status of disadvantaged rural and urban communities mainly in the state of West Bengal and neighbouring states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Orissa. The organization endowed with a rich array of professionals from different disciplines undertakes development initiatives in health and socio-economic sectors as well as works as a support agency to other organizations and institutions (trainings, research and evaluations).

Mukutmanipur lying on the eastern side of a vast stretch of water body is a striking combination of rolling land, natural vegetation, lake and tribal hamlets. The water reservoir was created by construction of a twelve-kilometer long earthen dyke across the confluence of two rivers - Kangsabati & Kumari (the second biggest earthen dam in India). Mukutmanipur's undulating forested landscape marked by the vibrant colors of Palash and Sonajhuri trees is refreshing and invigorating for the body and mind. The host community of *Santhals and Bhumijas* exuding warmth, simplicity and sincerity and their festivals of Tusu, Badna, Sahrai, Karam symbolized by much music and dance make the Mukutmanipur experience worthwhile.

Local livelihoods are being enhanced using tourism as a vehicle for promotion like a number of micro enterprise activities being started and promoted such as sericulture, pisciculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, pickles, papad, and other food processing activities along with development of local handicrafts (the indigenous Sabai grass being used for developing contemporary items). Tourist infrastructure including cottages, interpretation center and amphitheatre are envisaged to be created and ultimately to be managed by the local community. In addition there are efforts towards revival of local cultural heritage of performing arts and developing a number of adventure tourism activities such as rock climbing, kayaking, canoeing, hiking, and star gazing.

## Goal

The goal of the practice was to help the community led management committee for the tourism project do the following: (1) develop an awareness of the broad determinants of health & well being; (2) create a unique vision of a healthy community; and (3) develop a tool to help them make decisions about the potential impact of tourism project on the health and well-being of their community.

## Strategy

The strategy used was to engage people in a community development approach called the PATH (People Assessing Their Health) Process. The PATH Process, which was developed in north-eastern Nova Scotia, Canada, uses community health impact assessment (CHIA) as a way of engaging community people and organizations in the development of healthy public policy.



## Process

The process was undertaken in Mukutmanipur during May 2006 involving 22 men and women who were members of Mukutmanipur Tourism Management Committee as well as local self help groups. The initial result was that the community members were able to critically analyze their situation in relation to the tourism project by looking at things in a new way. The group was able to develop a comprehensive vision of a healthy community and develop a community health impact assessment tool (CHIAT). This tool is a check list, outlining the indicators that help the community members achieve their vision of a healthy community.

### **Their vision of community's well being included the following aspects –**

- Education for all villagers
- Improved economic condition
- Good roads and better communication facilities
- Availability of safe drinking water
- Sanitary latrine for every family
- Health awareness for all
- Scope of Higher education for all boys and girls
- Scope for Vocational training
- Improved Agricultural practices & better land use
- Adequate facility of irrigation
- Facility for Micro- credit
- Marketing & Distribution infrastructure facility within the village
- Opportunity for income generation through handicrafts, Food and fruit preservation enterprises and other micro enterprises
- Peace & harmony in the community

Community members with support from facilitators tested the tool using the construction of cottages as the project to assess and asking what potential impact these cottages will have on the well being of the community. The response from the group was overwhelming positive. They were surprised at all the issues that they thought of regarding the upcoming cottages project during the exercise. They opined they had discussed and brought up issues which they had never thought of before. For example they would never have thought how this project would affect the harmony in the community by generating intra community competitiveness or how these cottages and the inflow of tourists might affect their culture and, in particular, the impact this project could have on the youth in their community. Some of them also were anxious about any damage to their environment due to enhanced tourist related activities

However looking back at how the proposed project will affect the different things identified above, they felt that the project in general would contribute to the overall well-being of the community. But they felt that they needed to put safeguards in place so that negative impacts could be mitigated.

An action plan was also developed from the test of the tool in order to see how to enhance the positive aspects of the project as well as to discuss ways to mitigate the negative aspects, if any. Their action plan reflected the following critical issues:-

- Creating Facilities for providing first aid to tourists if required particularly in context of introduction of rock climbing & related activities
- Provision of /Linkage to access Ambulance services if needed
- Undertake social mobilization for Compulsory Primary Education for all children
- Creating scope for Functional literacy for adult illiterate women which would also empower them and help them to participate meaningfully
- Vocational Training opportunities particularly for unemployed youth and women (e.g. on Boat Repairing, Electrical repairing, Handicrafts including design support for items which have demand in market etc.)
- Training on improved agricultural practices like Vegetable cultivation using Bio-fertilizer, Horticulture development (fruit tree plantation) for improvement in livelihoods

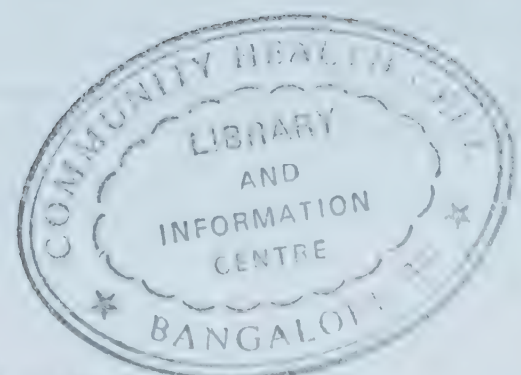


- Pisciculture
- Animal Husbandry – Duck Rearing, Goat Rearing
- Provision of Safe drinking water
- Intense mobilization so that each village household Sanitary Latrine in the s
- Dustbin installation & Beautification of the area on the sides of the water body
- Improving Local Transport facilities
- Preservation of Adibasi (Tribal) language
- Promoting Adibasi (Tribal) Culture (Dance, Songs & Festivals) :Helping tourists to understand tribal culture better

They also identified people in the community including members of the Tourism Management Committee and Self Help Groups who would be responsible for implementation of the above activities including areas where support from Government, Panchayat and other agencies including ASHA.

While the process was useful for the men in the community, it has empowered the women to a great extent, who felt that it provided them an opportunity to have a say and also be heard in the village development processes.

The PATH Process has been successfully carried out in six communities in Canada and is now being implemented in India. An important part of the on-going discussion and evaluation will deal with how the process can be translated into other cultural contexts





# Psychological Strengths influence on Health and Quality of Life in Older Australians:

## The Relationships between these strengths, Health Status and Quality of Life in Older Australians Receiving Low-Level Community Care

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### Abstract:

The potential for spiraling health care costs of the ageing baby boomer cohort has provided impetus for research into all aspects of this group in Australia and other developed countries. This study investigates the psychological strengths that older adults use in maintaining their health and quality of life. The qualitative analysis of the interviews of 10 older adults in Phase 1 of this study found that a positive outlook, social connectedness, spirituality, and adaptability were important factors. Additionally, the receipt of support services were shown to be important factors to maintaining health, quality of life and the ability for those over 65 to remain independent in their own home in the community. Phase 2 of this study, which is about to commence will provide a quantitative investigation of the degree of the relationship that each of these strengths has with health and quality of life by surveying 1000 older adults. Previous research indicated that a number of these strengths can be enhanced with minimal intervention, their positive relationship to health status, the potential for flow on financial savings, promotion of health and improvements to life satisfaction is substantial.

### INTRODUCTION

As we age, physical and psychological health and quality of life becomes increasingly more important. It is predicted that by 2051, the Australian population above 65 years of age will increase from 13.4 % to approximately 30% of our total population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003). Systems of care for older Australians will become increasingly relied upon by larger numbers of people. A recent document released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2006) clearly demonstrates the increasing trend for Australians to live longer. This may also increase the length of time that they experience severe or profound limitations.

Typically government expenditure has been aimed at policies related to the medical needs of older people, however it is only recently that social and lifestyle needs of this group have begun to be addressed. The need to address the potential spiraling costs associated with health care of older people in society have been recognized at both at international and national level with various research directions being established (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Office for an Ageing Australia of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing 2003; United Nations Programme on Ageing and the International Association of Gerontology 2003).

However, as the proportion of older adults increases, their health status and quality of life will become more important to maintain and enhance than ever before in reducing the associated costs of providing healthcare and support. For the purpose of this study, subjective health status will be defined as how

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Coralie has been a Registered Nurse for over 30 years with her career spent mostly in the domain of aged care as a domiciliary nurse. She has also completed two degrees in Psychology, and is a Registered Psychologist. She is currently undertaking a PhD at the University Of Southern Queensland, and also works part-time completing health and psychological assessments for Centrelink (Australian Government). This project combines both of her passions: health care in the elderly and positive psychology.

Dr Fallon is the primary supervisor for Coralie's PhD, and works as a Research Fellow in the Centre for Rural and Remote Area Health at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba.



older people perceive and self-report their own level of vitality, physical and mental functioning, and any limitations they may perceive in these areas (Bowling 2005). Quality of life will be defined as perceptions people have about their level of personal satisfaction with standard of living, safety, subjective health status and personal relationships (Cummins et al. 2003).

Smith, Young & Lee (2004) suggest that programs designed to promote and maintain positive psychological aspects in older adults may be beneficial in promoting feelings of well-being and subjective health status in this group of people. They note, however, that there is a need for more research to better understand the psychological characteristics of older adults and how this impacts on subjective health status. In addition to evaluating subjective health status, a number of researchers have identified the need to look at general quality of life issues in older people (Deiner & Fujita 1997).

Although quality of life does include satisfaction with health, there are other aspects of quality of life such as satisfaction with standard of living, achievements, personal relationships, safety, community, and future security (Bowling 2005).

An overview of research in the area of psychological strengths in positive psychology will be provided. Each of the strength areas identified in previous research in older adults will be considered, and the rationale and methodology for the current study will be provided.

## **Positive Psychology**

Psychology as a science has tended to focus primarily on illness and weakness in the past. In the wake of World War II, however humanistic psychologists began to consider the study of human strengths and how these characteristics act as buffers to mental and physical health. These considerations became the focus of the positive psychology movement. The message of the positive psychology movement is that humans are not passive vessels, but are decision makers whose strengths can be amplified and used to enhance health (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000). Ranzijn, Harford & Andrews (2002) assert that the promotion of research in this emerging science of positive psychology in older people is important to reduce negative stereotypes of the older person and broadcast the strengths and value of the older individual to their community.

## **Explanatory Style**

Peterson (1994) asserts that learned helplessness, a phenomena in animal research, is also the basis for some behaviours in humans who have been exposed to uncontrollable events in their past. However, human beings differ from animals, in that humans can develop learned helplessness through vicarious experience, for example, by way of watching television news stories. In humans, learned helplessness appears to mimic the symptoms of reactive depression and some humans appear to be more immune to learned helplessness than others (Petersen, Maier & Seligman 1995; Seligman 1975, 1991).

A variety of explanations has been offered for why some people are less likely to develop learned helplessness. The most plausible and empirically tested of these explanations is based upon explanatory style. Explanatory style is the term used to describe individual perceptions based on events from past experience and is about a specific event (Petersen, Maier & Seligman 1995; Petersen et al. 1982). It is posited that when people are confronted by an event they will ask themselves "why?". Within this theory, the focus is on the way people view negative life events and how they distance themselves from their perception of these events. The answer they provide determines their reaction to the event according to three dimensions (Seligman & Isaacowitz 2000). People who have an optimistic outlook will see the event as temporary, specific to the event, and view failure as the result of an external event. In contrast, people with a pessimistic outlook are likely to view an event as having permanence, affecting everything in their life, and failure is likely to be perceived as due to something about themselves (Seligman & Isaacowitz 2000).

Pessimistic explanatory style has been linked to poorer immune system function (Kamen-Siegel et al. 1991) and has been associated with higher mortality rates in longitudinal studies (Petersen, Maier & Seligman 1995) and increased risk of disease and death (Maruta et al. 2000). A review of several studies examining the relationship between explanatory style and illness by Petersen & Seligman (1987) found that people with a pessimistic explanatory style are at risk of disease and pre-mature death. A pessimistic explanatory style has also been associated with intermediate levels of depression. Furthermore, Isaacowitz (2005) examined the relationship between explanatory style and quality of life in 280 young middle-aged and older adults. He found that a more optimistic explanatory style was predictive of positive quality of life in adults of all ages. However, it was also revealed that extreme optimists who had experienced negative events reported high levels of depression (Isaacowitz 2005). This finding suggests that extremely optimistic older people may have a difficult time adjusting to age-related changes.

Additionally, a number of activities have been demonstrated to change pessimistic explanatory style (Seligman 1991). Ranzijn (2002) suggests that formal interventions or informal strategies may strengthen adoption of an optimistic explanatory style in an older Australian population and protect against the aversive affects caused by pessimism, and hopelessness. Additionally, Lachman (1990) observed that younger and older adults who reported poorer health also attribute negative outcomes to



things about themselves, and tended to assess outcomes to global as opposed to specific causes, a pattern typical of a pessimistic explanatory style.

#### **Dispositional Optimism**

In contrast to explanatory style, dispositional optimism refers to generalized positive expectancies people have about their goals and their ability to find ways to achieve them (Scheier & Carver 1985; Scheier, Carver & Bridges 1994). Scheier & Carver (1992) suggest that the difference between dispositional optimists and dispositional pessimists is that dispositional optimists cope better with stress, confront their problems and deal with them head on, and are active problem solvers, whereas pessimists tend to avoid problems and give up more quickly.

A number of studies examining the relationship between explanatory style, dispositional optimism and subjective health status have concluded that explanatory style and dispositional optimism are related, but produce different outcomes when used with the same population as they would appear to be measuring two separate constructs (Isaacowitz 2005; Isaacowitz & Seligman 2002; Tomakowsky et al. 2001). Snyder (2000) observes that whilst explanatory style is related to positive outcome expectancy for a specific situation, dispositional optimism refers to more generalized outcomes (Scheier & Carver 1985; Scheier, Carver & Bridges 1994). In other words, explanatory style tends to be consistent within domain (e.g., academic vs. interpersonal) but has the potential to vary across domains, while dispositional optimism refers to general expectancies that a person carries across all domains (Isaacowitz 2005).

Research examining dispositional optimism has observed that optimistic middle aged men recover faster from coronary bypass surgery (Scheier et al. 1989) and middle aged older women experience less anxiety and perceived stress (Robinson -Whelan et al. 1997). Additionally, Bromberger (1996) observed that pessimistic women, when faced with ongoing stress, were more likely to be experiencing depression at a three-year follow-up.

A number of studies have examined the relationship between psychological and physical health and dispositional optimism. A longitudinal study of middle aged men by Scheier et al. (1989) found that those identified as optimists reported a higher quality of life at six-month follow-up than pessimists. Similarly, optimists have been observed to exhibit more adaptive coping skills and lower levels of self-reported psychological distress than pessimists at 3, 6 and 12 months after surgery in a sample of women diagnosed with Stage I or II breast cancer (Carver et al. 1993). Isaacowitz (2005) examined the relationship between dispositional optimism and quality of life in 280 young middle-aged and older adults. He found that high levels of dispositional optimism were predictive of positive quality of life in adults of all ages.

#### **Psychological Resilience**

Another positive psychological construct likely to influence subjective health status and quality of life is that of psychological resilience. Connor & Davidson (2003) consider resilience to embody personal qualities that enable individuals to thrive despite adversity. Kaplan (2002) describes resilience as the ability to view life's events as a challenge. He further suggests that resilient individuals are more likely to use adaptive coping strategies and thus more likely to engage in health-promoting behaviors (Kaplan 2002). While there are many definitions of resilience, Luthar & Cushing (1999) assert that the underlying constructs in all definitions are that of risk (or adversity associated with adjustment problems) and the likelihood of adapting positively to that adversity.

Kumpher (1999) asserts that resilience is the interaction between the way in which an individual modifies or perceives their environment. Individual internal resilience factors such as cognitive, behavioral, emotional, physical and spiritual elements impact on this perception and effect the adaptation process. There have been a number of studies that have examined the qualities that embody resilience in relation to subjective health status. Resilience has been shown to have a positive relationship to physical and subjective health status in survivors of violent trauma (Connor, Davidson & Lee 2003). Health-related hardiness, one of the important sub-constructs of resilience, refers to the capacity to successfully adapt in the face of challenging or threatening conditions and the development of competence under conditions of severe adversity (Masten, Best & Garmezy 1990; Wolff 1995). Connor et al. (2003) also suggest that psychological resilience is a modifiable construct that is amenable to enhancement with treatment and that such treatment would be of particular use in producing improvements in subjective health status (Connor & Davidson 2003). Luthar & Cicchetti (2000) suggest that the adaptive attributes of resilience are not innate but are shaped by the circumstances of life. To this end, resilience should be able to be enhanced by intervention strategies, some of which are tailored to enhancing individual resilience and others which are models designed to enhance resilience in communities (Luthar & Cicchetti 2000).

#### **Spirituality**

Spirituality is defined as holding a belief in a supernatural reality, the motivation for the need to attain higher consciousness, belief in some form of afterlife, and the desire to achieve inner harmony without adherence to organized or specific doctrines (Fontana 2003). By contrast, religion has a belief in a



spiritual dimension, observes specific spiritual rituals and practices and closely follows a code of behavior based on spiritual doctrines.

Some studies have considered the impact of spirituality on both subjective health status and quality of life and researchers are increasingly considering spirituality as a variable of interest, particularly in older adults (Weaver et al. 2005). In their review of religion and health research, Koenig, McCollough & Larsen (2001) reported a positive relationship between religious practice and belief and positive health behaviors. Duke University has a centre dedicated to the study of spirituality and has released a large number of peer-reviewed journal articles on this topic. While religion has been shown to have an association with physical and mental health status and quality of life, (Kass et al. 1991; Koenig 1998; Koenig et al. 1997; Koenig, Pargament & Neilsen 1998), far less research has been conducted on the relationship between spirituality and subjective health status and quality of life. Nevertheless, there are some studies where spirituality has been observed to have a positive relationship to both quality of life and subjective health status in a sample of adults (Kass et al. 1991; McBride et al. 1998). Spirituality has also been associated with a lower relative risk of disease and enhanced well-being (Levin & Chatters 1998) and enhanced well-being in people suffering from diabetes mellitus (Landis, 1996). Additionally, Brady, Peterman, Fitchett, Mo, & Cella (1999) found that spirituality was an important contributor to quality of life in their study of oncology patients.

#### Social Networks

Social networks have been shown to have a very positive influence on health even in research controlling for a number of physical and psychological variables, social networks have been identified as making a direct positive contribution to health (House, Landis & Umberson 1988). Furthermore, the lack of social networks (i.e., social isolation) has been demonstrated to have as much negative impact on health as cigarette smoking (House 2001). There are a number of studies demonstrating a relationship between limited social networks, poor-health and reduced perceptions of well-being in the elderly (Cutrona & Russell 1986; Rook 1994). House (2001) asserts that with the growing awareness of the importance of social networks on the health and quality of life older person, that more research is needed to nurture and encourage social relationships.

#### Rationale

The literature provides us with some clues as to positive psychological constructs that influence subjective health status and quality of life in older people such as optimism, resilience, spirituality and the importance of social networks. This study provides a starting point for research of the relationship between these positive psychological attributes, health and quality of life in older people. Additionally, as this area of investigation is relatively new, there is a possibility that other positive qualities and characteristics of the individual may influence subjective health status and quality of life. In light of this, a two stage research process was proposed. In the first stage, an exploratory qualitative study examining older persons' perceptions of psychological strengths that contributed to their perceptions of health and quality of life was conducted. The results of this stage, as well as evidence in the literature, will then be used to inform the selection of variables to be used in the quantitative correlational study designed to determine the nature and strength of the associations between positive psychological variables and subjective health status and quality of life in older community-dwelling adults.

Older people for the purpose of both phases of this study were defined as those aged 65 and over. Older adults with a diagnosis of dementia, or with a high-care needs were excluded from the study to avoid potential confounds related to the need for greater levels of care. Thus, participants will be people only requiring minimal services to be maintained either in their own home or in hostel-type accommodation, though the potential for requiring increased care is high.

Phase 1 of the project used a qualitative analysis of 10 semi-structured interviews to provide information about what strengths older people use to maintain health and quality of life. Based on this information, Phase 2 will utilize a quantitative methodology by means of surveys.

#### Phase 1

Grbich (1999) asserts that "truth" is gained from understanding the actions, beliefs and values from the participants standpoint. To this end, this preliminarily qualitative study was designed to elicit the participants "truth" from their interviews which will then direct which surveys are chosen in the quantitative second phase of the study.

#### Participants

Four participants for this study were drawn from clients of a community support service who responded to a letter sent by their administrator to a random sample of their clients on behalf of the author, and who contacted the author by phone if they chose to participate. The remaining six were a sample of convenience derived from contacts of colleagues and friends. The 10 participants, all of whom were retired, were from a range of occupations and comprised of 3 men and 7 women (N= 10) with a mean age of 82.1 years. All participants were provided with a letter of introduction from the University of Southern Queensland, which contained a plain language statement about the study, confirmed that ethical clearance had been obtained and provided information about confidentiality. A consent form was signed by each participant prior to the commencement of the interview.



All semi-structured interviews, which lasted approximately one hour, were conducted face-to-face in the participants' homes, digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim and returned to the participants for verification. Each participant provided a pseudonym if they wished, and all documentation associated with the interview and transcript carried this as its only identification. Each participant was asked questions about what they considered as good health and what constituted good quality of life for them. They were also asked to talk about what psychological strengths they believed helped them to maintain their health and quality of life.

#### Thematic analysis

The prominent themes identified were: optimism, social network, spirituality, assistance, resilience, and community volunteer work.

#### Subjective Health

The responses that participants offered as what they considered as good physical and mental health centered on their ability to do everyday things and being happy.

"to do what you wanted to do in the garden and your housework and just generally do what you felt you wanted to do, that you would like to be able to do."

"To be able to function, to know what's going on in the world, be interested in the world, be able to do just general every day things really."

"Well feeling good. Lack of pains. They're the main things, I think that you feel good...you lead a relatively happy life and I enjoy company."

#### Quality of Life

The way that participants defined their quality of life was largely determined by their perceptions of their health.

"You can't have quality of life unless you have health really and that's my definition of health and that's very important in relation to your quality of life."

"Oh, well, having enough money I suppose [laugh] one thing and being contented with the things that you do."

Some participants also considered the importance of family and having enough money.

"Well, having good friends, being close to your family"

"Oh, well, having enough money I suppose [laugh] one thing and being contented with the things that you do."

#### Optimism

The psychological strengths that participants identified as being important in maintaining their health and quality of life covered a range of overlapping constructs. The most frequent of these was optimism. Other sub-themes of this concept included: having a good sense of humor, being happy, being grateful and laughing.

"Well, negativity causes people to become unhappy and they don't advance, they don't achieve, they don't do any of these things if a person is negative."

"Well, I think I have a positive mind, that's one of the main things because the mind plays a lot, has a lot to do with your actual health. If you think you're sick, you're sick..... I think you've just got to have the right attitude and don't let your health things take control of your life."

"If you can sit down and have a darn good old laugh. You should hear us around here sometimes.....we just laugh and laugh and laugh. Sometimes there's five and six of us just around in the front there"

"I just accepted that people should be lucky, but I know when we have a really good day now I'm grateful, deeply grateful"

#### Social Networks

The deep importance that all participants ascribed to their social network was striking. The friendships and family connections were deeply valued, and profoundly significant to all participants.

"But the friendships you make are the best things. They are better than any medicine you can get."

"I think family is paramount and I've been blessed with a wonderful family and I know they're there. They're there if I need them or I just want to talk to them or whatever, they're there, and that's all you need .."

"The loneliness is the worst part of getting old. Your friends, we used to have, a lot of wonderful friends, but they've all deserted us. They've gone to a better land so it's a bit lonely. Never mind. Sunday afternoons are the worst."

#### Spirituality



Many of the concepts identified by the participants overlapped, as is evident from this comment by an 89 year old lady, talking about friends dying, and leaving them behind acknowledges her spiritual beliefs. Spirituality was identified as important to varying degrees by all participants, and although all came from a Christian background the discussion on spirituality centered on their belief in “a greater being” or “God” rather than attendance at a place of worship. Many had previously attended church regularly, but as they had become older it was their personal faith that was important. This is illustrated by the following quotes.

“If you haven’t got a lot of faith, I think you lose a lot, but you haven’t got to go to church to have it.”

“I think that most people neglect another aspect of health which is the most important and that is spiritual health.”

“I think if I didn’t pray I wouldn’t be so strong.”

#### Psychological Resilience

For many, spirituality formed part of their ability to cope with daily pressures, and added to their resilience. Their resilience, made up of their ability to adapt to new situations and ability for creative thinking was evident in the following comments.

“I’m very adaptable, that’s another thing I am. I can adapt myself to anything, any conditions, I have. I must have over the years, mustn’t I?”

“I suppose that’s a sort of inner strength. You think – well pick yourself up and get on with it.”

“Being positive and try and think “If you can’t do it one way, well do it another way” or if you can’t do something there, something else – because always one door shuts as another door will open.”

#### Assistance

Participants were also asked about how the community assistance they received impacted on their life. The assistance included help with domestic chores, meals-on-wheels, and home nursing. For many, the assistance provided another form of social network and was more than having the work done, that they could no longer do.

“If she can spare the time she’ll still have a cup of coffee. And a yarn. She’ll still have a cup of coffee and that’s good medication – better than pills.”

“And I have a cleaning lady who comes in once every two weeks, well she cleans through, and she strips the bed and changes it for me, washes the sheets, puts them out on the line and that’s a great help. Those are the sort of things that are helpful”

#### Volunteer Work

The importance of social contact was also evident in the comments participants made about volunteer work, of things they did from home to help others which gave them a feeling of being useful and of value to their community. The following comments provide a good summary of their feelings.

“Well, I mean my social contact really is for them but it does me good as well”

“You know if I suddenly couldn’t do a lot of these things that I do do, I would be really bored and I’d be hard put to think up some way to get around that.”

“He’s always wanting to fix things for people. He loves fixing things. He loves to do little things to please people.”

## Discussion

The qualitative analysis of Phase 1 provided a rich source of data about what psychological strengths the participants used to maintain their health and quality of life. Most findings of this study were consistent with the literature reviewed. All participants considered maintaining a positive outlook important, which is well supported by the literature. All reported that remaining optimistic was vital to feeling well. This finding is well supported by studies such as (Scheier et al. 1989) who found faster recovery rates to illness and surgery in those individuals with a positive outlook.

Being resilient and not giving up was a common comment provided by many participants. Part of this construct is about being able to adapt to new situations which many participants mentioned, in relation to adapting their lives as they met health challenges. This finding is supported by the research by (Kaplan 2002) who asserts that adaptable individuals are more likely to engage in positive health promoting behaviors.

The concept of spirituality and its importance to the older adult’s health and quality of life was evident in many participant’s responses and is well supported in the literature (Kass et al. 1991). Although some participants stated that spirituality was not an important part of their life, most found peace in their faith, or prayed regularly although none attended church anymore.

The strength of the importance of the older person’s social network impressed the investigator by its magnitude. House et al.(1988) affirm the importance of this vital source of strength for the older person, and recognize the positive contribution social networks make to health. All participants commented on the value of their family and other social networks in many aspects of their life.



The assistance provided by service providers to the participants also created social network links which were deeply valued. The physical value of the assistance was important to participants in maintaining their ability to live relatively independently, but for many it also provided a safety-net. When there were problems the participants knew they were able to access help if they needed it. The peace of mind this provided was immeasurable for many participants.

The feelings of being valued themselves for what they were able to do for others was also something that was echoed by many. For some, being able to make toys to donate to charity gave the same feelings of worth as a man who made house numbers for his neighbours, or a lady who was compiling a booklet of handy hints and recipes, or the man who was the treasurer of a service organization. All reported how much pleasure they derived from what they were able to provide to others.

One of the limitations of this study is the transferability of the findings to future generations due to huge impact on the participants by the impact of World War II. Although some participants had been directly involved in the armed services, even those who were not, were still deeply affected. The consistency in the participant's responses and recurrence of themes in the analysis were striking, are therefore unlikely to be artefact. For that reason it is important to be able to empirically test the strength of the relationships between the identified strengths and the health and quality of life of older adults. This will be the aim of the second phase of this project, which is about to commence.

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# Social Capital: Strengthening women through networks

Archana Jetti

## Introduction

Women's empowerment has gained currency over the past three decades in both academic and policy circles. The term *empowerment* has replaced buzzwords of the past like 'welfare', 'upliftment', 'poverty alleviation', and 'community participation'. While it has undergone several surgical treatments, the changes are not reflected in its practical application. From a minimal definition that encompasses control over material resources, it has extended to include control over ideology (Molyneux, 1985; Batliwala, 1994; Osirim, 2001). Despite the current development discourse's emphasis on the comprehensive definition of empowerment, many international, non-governmental and feminist organizations are still maintaining a specialized focus of empowerment.

This is evident in the agenda of most development policies of the global South which dichotomize interventions into either gender issues such as sexual and reproductive rights, legal rights, protection from violence and the like, or economic justice issues such as income generation, employment in government services, debt relief and the like (Barton, 2005). While each agenda is important in its own right, one cannot be ignored or overlooked at the expense of the other, especially if empowerment in its current characterization is to be operationalized. An examination of the appropriation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), formulated by the United Nations, highlights the specialized focus among most non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their endeavor to attain women's empowerment.

The Eight MDGs that world leaders agreed upon and put forth at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000 are 1) poverty reduction 2) primary education 3) gender equality 4) reducing child mortality 5) maternal health 6) Disease prevention and reduction, especially HIV/AIDS and malaria 7) environmental sustainability and 8) equitable global finance and trade. Most NGOs targeting development in the global South have picked up one or a combination of a few MDGs in their development foci toward poor women. But success in one area does not lead to success in the others.

For instance, the reproductive and sexual rights on most NGOs agenda aims to reduce fertility rather than giving women control over their sexuality and fertility. The focus is on educating women on family planning, use of contraceptives and the like. Instead NGOs should enable women to recognize, access and assert their reproductive and sexual rights. The disconnect between the discourse of holistic empowerment and implementation of piece-meal programs, especially in the lives of poor women of the global South, is due to an ineffective framework through which their lives are viewed. Instead of pitting gender justice issues against economic justice issues, a framework that integrates both the issues in addition to other concerns that are of importance to the women themselves is needed.

This paper makes the case that Social Capital provides that lens through which we can explore the multiple dimensions within which the notion of women's empowerment is enmeshed. It will begin by delineating the meaning of women's empowerment as employed in the current development discourse limiting the exploration to women in the South Asian context, specifically India. This will be followed by an explanation of the concept of social capital highlighting its origins, definitional conundrums and why it provides a clearer framework for understanding women's empowerment. In conclusion a case study will be used to establish the unity of the theory of social capital to the praxis of women's empowerment.

## What is women's empowerment?

The notion of empowerment has had significant coverage in the social sciences, especially feminist literature albeit in varying degrees. In its minimalist version, it was defined as "bringing about equality between women and men in the control of production factors and the control of distribution of the benefits of development" (Sarah H. Longwe as cited in Osirim, 2001, p. 168). Since women were mostly confined to the private sphere of the home, with childcare and management of the household as their primary function, they had limited entry into the labor market resulting in limited financial independence. It was assumed that greater financial independence would change the status quo of poor women in the southern hemisphere.

On the contrary, there is ample evidence to suggest that women's entry into the labor forces had added the extra burden of work to the already existing chores of childcare and household maintenance (Batliwala, 1994). In patriarchal societies where hierarchy of gender is not questioned, the earnings from small scale employment like sheep rearing, poultry farming, tailoring, soap-making and the like are typically handed over to the husbands, fathers or other male heads of households, making financial independence seem like an illusion (Muhmud, 2003). In order to be holistic, the definition of empowerment should include change in power relations where the powerless can take charge of their life situations. Addressing the



structural factors that perpetuate exploitation of poor women necessitates an extended definition, which Moser eloquently articulated as "giving women the right to determine choices in life and to influence the direction of change through the ability to gain control over crucial material and non-material resources" (as cited in Osirim, 2001, p. 168).

This definition adds to the inventory of resources, over which women need control in order to bring about a change in their status quo, i.e., in addition to material they need non-material resources. In the study of population and health, Batliwala subsumes within the category of non-material resources i.) intellectual resources such as knowledge, information and ideas and ii.) ideology, i.e., beliefs, norms, attitudes, values and behavior. According to her, power accrues to those who have access to material, intellectual and ideological resources. Therefore, women who are able to accrue such power will be in a better position not only to challenge the inequitable power relations but also gain greater self-respect, self-confidence and a general sense of well-being.

Women's successful attempt to accrue such power is documented by Mary J. Osirim in a study of students of color in predominantly white campuses in America. She demonstrates that minority students can actively engage in shaping their own experiences if the right environment and control over material as well as non-material resources is made available. She observes that students gain agency in their experiences in colleges that adopt affirmative action policies in faculty hiring and student admissions. Specific curricula in disciplines like sociology, that explores minority backgrounds, provide these students with intellectual and ideological resources that they can use toward the kind of empowerment they seek.

One of the subtleties of women's empowerment is that it is not something that can be handed down, as welfare or aid. Empowerment arises out of women's interests and in their own understanding of what needs to improve to enhance the quality of their lives. Maxine Molyneux, the most influential writer on women's interests, makes the distinction between women's practical and strategic interests. *Practical interests* are derived from women's lived experiences in their roles as wives and mothers in the society. Women's positioning within the gendered division of labor, forces them to focus less on themselves and more on the roles they are expected to perform.

*Strategic interests* on the other hand are derived deductively when women challenge their positioning within the society. Here the emphasis is to change the current power structures and to put in its place a satisfactory set of arrangement where women's needs are recognized and given weight. An external agency cannot decide what these strategic needs are, they can only provide a critical space within which women can see for themselves what they need and seek to bring about the needed change. An example of such a critical space is demonstrated in a literacy campaign, launched in the early 1990s by the government of India in collaboration with several other volunteer organizations, in Nellore District of the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh (Batliwala, 1994).

A lesson in the adult literacy primer of the literacy campaign depicted a story of a poor landless woman whose husband spent the meager family wages on alcohol consumption while the rest of the family struggled to make ends meet. Realizing that the story was mirroring their own lives, the women who were attending the adult literacy classes decided to take action. They initiated an uprising against government licensed liquor shops in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The anti-liquor agitation came about as women critically re-examined their lives, recognized the structures of power and initiated action toward their betterment. While external agencies can act as catalyst, they cannot empower women. Empowerment occurs organically out of women's interests depending on their priorities.

Another subtlety in the notion of women's empowerment is that it is rarely a neutral process. In empowering themselves women are essentially challenging the hegemony of those in power resulting in social upheavals. As in the case of the anti-liquor movement women challenged not only the liquor contractors and politicians, but also the male heads of households (fathers, husbands, brothers), which is unacceptable in a male-dominated society. They put their lives and welfare at risk by contesting prevailing patriarchal ideologies that promote obedience, sacrifice, submission and silent suffering.

Molyneux cautions policy makers that "strategic interests can only be effective as a form of intervention when full account is taken of these practical interests" (1985, p. 234). If strategic changes occur in piecemeal fashion and there are no alternative compensations made for the risks undertaken by the women, then short-term practical interests of the women could be threatened. For instance, programs that begin with a neutral focus such as reproductive rights might face backlash from religious fundamentalists and others in the community who are uncomfortable with women choosing for themselves what they want to do with their bodies. It is therefore essential for development policies to acknowledge and address these concerns that might jeopardize women's lives.

While the development discourse and rhetoric has called for a holistic view of women's empowerment, the policies at the grass-roots level are not mirroring this appeal. A primary example is the concerted efforts to eradicate the practice of female genital cutting (FGC) primarily in sub-Saharan Africa and certain countries in the Middle East and Asia. Eradication strategies have included legislation to prosecute those practicing FGC, educating communities on the harms associated with this practice and



training for the treatment of FGC related complications. While these interventions are focusing on the symptoms, they are undermining the broader structural issues of gender and power.

The practice of FGC is culturally laden, i.e., its fundamental purpose is to reinforce subordination through social confinement and restraint of sexual desire (Allotey and Reidpath, 2005). Eradication strategies demand more than a technical fix of the clinical problem. Intervention programs should campaign against the cultural traditions that bind women's freedoms at the structural level of gender inequity. Reproductive rights such as the campaigns against FGC have diluted the broader agenda of empowerment by narrowing the focus to ameliorate specific harm. Feminist scholars have always contended that power relations, within which women's lives are enmeshed, operate at multiple levels.

Gita Sen and Srilatha Baltiwala, scholars in the field of population studies have identified four levels within which gender-power relations operate, they are: The household/family, the community/village, the market, the State. Women's interactions at each level are interconnected in such a manner that the status quo in one level is reinforced in the others. Therefore it is necessary to remember that changing the status of women in one level does not automatically carry on to other levels, i.e., if power relations in the household are overturned, the community level ideologies might still hold women in their grip or the market through its discrimination against the female labor force. In order to effect structural changes, simultaneous efforts should be made at all levels.

But not all women have the same kind of power relations at the same levels. Identifying the interactions at various levels requires a framework through which the women's networks can be viewed at the same time recognizing how the networks might be appropriated towards their empowerment. Social capital in its conceptualization as a theory of networks provides the needed framework to understand poor women's location in the power structure and how their networks can be leveraged to bring about the change that they desire. Fraught with definitional and conceptual conundrums, social capital has come to mean all things to all people. The next section will delineate this concept and sharpen its focus to serve in the explication of women's empowerment.

#### What is Social Capital?

Social capital as a construct has permeated multiple disciplines such as economics, political science, business management, social epidemiology, sociology and international development. The interdisciplinary nature of social capital rests on its attempt to understand human behavior based on social relations. But by virtue of being applied in various fields, the concept has undergone several definitional adjustments to suit the epistemological needs of the respective fields. The basic idea of social capital can be summed up in the common aphorism "It's not what you know, it's who you know". In other words, one's family, friends and acquaintances constitute an important asset that can be leveraged in times of need.

Pierre Bourdieu was the first social scientist to make a systematic analysis of this concept. Bourdieu defined it as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of durable network or more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances" (Fram, 2004, p. 561). It refers to the value attached to one's social ties. Keeping in line with Bourdieu's definition of the concept, i.e. instrumental and accruing to individuals by virtue of participation in a group, are Glenn Loury and James Coleman. Loury used the term to illustrate the differential access to opportunities for minorities and non-minorities based on their social ties (Portes, 1998, p. 5).

Coleman defines social capital by its function as a structure of relations between and among individuals (Coleman, 1988, p. 98). The 'durable networks', 'social ties' and 'structure of relations' is important in understanding how social capital works. Firstly, networks facilitate the *flow of information*. An individual with connections in strategic locations can gain information about opportunities otherwise unknown (or unseen). Allied to this is the second function of *influence*. Connections in high places can not only give access to information but also exert influence in favor of the individual. Finally, networks provide *reinforcements* of identity and recognition. Members of social groups with similar interests and resources derive identity from their membership and claim to resources of the group (Lin, 1999).

In their enthusiasm to popularize its functions (such as flow of information, influence, reinforcement) proponents of social capital have defined the concept based on what it does rather than what is it (Portes, 1998; Woolcock, 2001). Political scientist Robert Putnam has gained celebrity status for his book 'Bowling Alone' in which he defines social capital as "social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them...closely related to what some have called 'civic virtue'" (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). Putnam emphasizes civic virtue at the expense of 'networks' in making his argument for the decline in civic engagement in America. While such an argument has dramatic appeal, it leads to tautology since now social capital is defined by what social capital does.

Similar definitions can be found in the business and economics realm where social capital is defined as "...a harmonious commingling of trust, viable channels of communication, and norms and sanctions...sufficient levels of social capital are essential for social and economic development" (Neace, 1999, p. 150). Usage of terms like 'trust', 'norms', 'reciprocity' as synonyms for social capital leading to difficulty in measuring the concept. While the conceptual overreach into multiple disciplines through such definitions might be broad, there is danger of employing social capital as a panacea. A parsimonious



definition with a sharp focus on embedded resources in the available and potential social ties lends itself to concrete indicators and measurements.

Toward this end, Nan Lin formulated a theory of social capital as "resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions" (Lin, 1999, p.35). This definition has relevance for the present purpose of exploring women's social ties within the power structures and how they can be accessed for purposes of empowerment. A common feature of the poor is that they are excluded (often actively) from membership in certain networks, which leaves them lacking in information, influence and reinforcements. Therefore, understanding the networks that are currently available and those that can be sought in the future is a strength-based strategy that should be harnessed by development policy makers and practitioners.

A common typology to understand networks is through the notion of 'bridging' and 'bonding' social capital. Bonding refers to relations between family members and close friends while bridging on the other hand refers to distant friends, colleagues and associates (Woolcock, 2001). The sociologist Mark Granovetter uses 'bonding' and 'bridging' to describe the mediatory role of social capital in poverty transitions. He recognizes that intra-community (bonds) ties are needed to give members of the social network, like families and friends, a sense of common purpose and identity. But in a modern society there needs to be inter-community (bridges) ties that can cut across social divides such as religion, race, socio-economic status and so on. Bonding and bridging social capital make clear the distinction between "getting by" and "getting ahead".

Individuals who are able to flow in and out of strong and weak ties can maximize the benefits from social capital. This can be illustrated through the following example given by the World Bank development researchers Michael Woolcock and Deepa Narayan. Poor entrepreneurs initially depend on family and friends (bonding social capital) for credit and insurance needs. But as their business expands and they acquire skills and resources to participate in extensive networks, they transcend their immediate community into mainstream economic life (bridging social capital). The diagram in the Appendix demonstrates graphically the efficient use of social capital in the context of group-based credit programs in the developing world.

In micro-credit programs, poor people who lack material collateral are given loans on the basis of membership in a small peer group. The group is jointly held responsible for any defaults by the members. With the help of these loans the group members can start or expand their business leading to an improvement in the welfare of the individual member's family (Box A). The economic returns to the given network reach a limit (Box B). As the network expands the resources are overwhelmed, reducing the well being of the established members. In fact, the long term members may find group commitment and obligations to be obstacles in their future advancements leading to a decline in welfare (Box C). This leads to a situation where members divest in bonding social capital (Box D) and move on to networks that are more diverse with promising economic opportunities and higher welfare for their families (Box E). Migration from villages to cities is a prime example of such bridging social capital.

The above example highlights the negative aspects of social capital in that it can exclude non-members from access to resources and make excess claims on group members restricting their freedom. Never the less, the right combination of social networks, can lead to better opportunities for the poor. Granovetter used the notion of bonding and bridging in terms of economic betterment but the framework can just as easily be applied to explore the non-economic or strategic interests of women. The next section will take up a case study to demonstrate the usefulness of social capital theory in understanding women's empowerment.

#### *Velugu: Unity of theory to praxis*

Velugu is a project financed by the World Bank in the Indian State of Andhra Pradesh with the aim of alleviating poverty through micro-credit schemes. This project is implemented by the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty, an autonomous body of the State Government. It has been in operation since June of 2000 and covers about 187,500 families. Velugu is focused on women belonging to the lowest caste in the Indian caste hierarchy, the Dalits. Small loans are given to a group of women, referred to as Self Help Groups (SHGs) that the group members allocate for income generating projects based on group consensus.

It is a common practice in micro-credit programs for the SHGs to meet on a regular basis every week to discuss matters related to loan repayment or future loan applications. For most SHG members this is their only group association outside of familial relations thereby leading to an expansion of their hitherto limited social networks. For instance, a business start up leads to interaction with market vendors for raw material, thus increasing their network base. While the networks are increasing due to economic reasons (i.e. practical interests), is it possible that there are resources embedded within these networks, which can be accessed for strategic interests?

In the Chintalladimma village of the Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh, an SHG had started a clothing business. The SHG consisted of 12 women wherein a couple of them were equipped with tailoring experience. When a decision to set up a tailoring business was made, all of them took up tailoring classes. With the micro-credit loan that the group received, they bought sewing machines and other necessary raw



material needed to set up their 'Ready to Wear' factory cum showroom. They work on contract basis with retailers in their district and plan to expand to the capital city of Hyderabad (Velugu, 2006). While this might not seem like a huge achievement, a look at their past shows the strides they have made.

The women in the SHG groups belong to the lowest caste ("untouchable" also referred to as Dalits) of the Indian caste hierarchy. While Dalits in general suffer heavy discrimination, the worst hit are the Dalit women. Historically they were not allowed to work outside the house by their families and communities since they were easy targets for the higher castes. The statistics on their apathy have reduced over the years but they are none the less vulnerable to attack. Prior to the Velugu project in the districts, the Dalit women in this SHG were restricted from working outside their homes and communities.

But when the Velugu volunteers informed them of the possible benefits (mostly monetary) that would accrue from small-scale businesses and the fact that they would be working with other women, their families were less apprehensive. Women who were earlier confined to their homes are now able to go beyond the work place to the market (20 kms away) to procure raw materials. Apart from breaking even, most have made enough profits to be able to save money from their business in the State Bank of India. While the families' income has obviously increased, there are other changes that are simultaneously occurring at various levels.

If viewed from the framework of bridging social capital, the women in the SHGs have networks, which include the immediate household, the market, the village and the State. The women are able to access the resources embedded in these networks as needed. The interactions in the market as well as the state (i.e. Banks) have increased their confidence in what they can achieve. Their improved economic status and their hardwork have earned them respect from their household and the village. As the women maneuver through various ties of the network structure, they are constantly negotiating the gender-power relations at each level.

By participating in this micro-credit program, they have broken the gender and caste stereotypes of the society. Their families appreciate them for adding to the meager income. The husbands have come to accept the independence of these women as they go about conducting their business outside the house. The local banks recognize them as successful clients as do the retailers at the market. Owning a business has opened up newer opportunities for the women as well as those on the other side of their networks. The economic outcomes grew out of women's practical interests but the non-economic outcomes came about due to their strategic interests.

If development policy makers and practitioners are aware of the available and potential networks and can make interventions which simultaneously address all level, it would create a critical space within in which women can recognize their interests and seek to realize them. The amount of assets available to the poor are very limited but their primary asset is in their available and potential networks. Portes asserts, "Whereas economic capital is in people's bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships" (1998, p. 7). Social capital is another tool in the hands of policy makers, practitioners and the women as they seek to negotiate the power structures with the ultimate goal of holistic empowerment.

#### Conclusion

Development scholarship in the past has put forth a compelling image of a poor woman from the Global South. She is depicted as a passive victim, assumed to "lead an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and her being 'third world' (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.)" (Mohanty as cited in Ray & Korteweg, 1999, p. 47). Evidence from the field presents the changing dynamic in the lives of poor women as they seek to empower themselves. Looking at women's lives through the lens of social capital provides greater insight into the complex relationships within which these women operate. Programs aimed at providing the tools from women's empowerment have thus far pigeonholed their goals into one or a few levels. A broader focus with the aim to challenge the structural gender-power relations at all levels can provide the critical space allowing for effective action for and by women.

#### Endnotes:

1. **Reproductive rights include:** freedom to decide the number, spacing and timing of children; access to services and information on highest standards of reproductive and sexual health; freedom from discrimination, coercion and violence in decisions concerning reproduction. **Sexual rights include:** respect for physical integrity of human being's body, i.e., freedom from violence, mutilation or sexual assault; access to highest standards of sexual well-being; right to decisions concerning sexuality free of discrimination, coercion, or violence (Sen & Batliwala, 2000, p.23).
2. Velugu in the local vernacular means light
3. Current statistics can be found at [www.velugu.org](http://www.velugu.org).

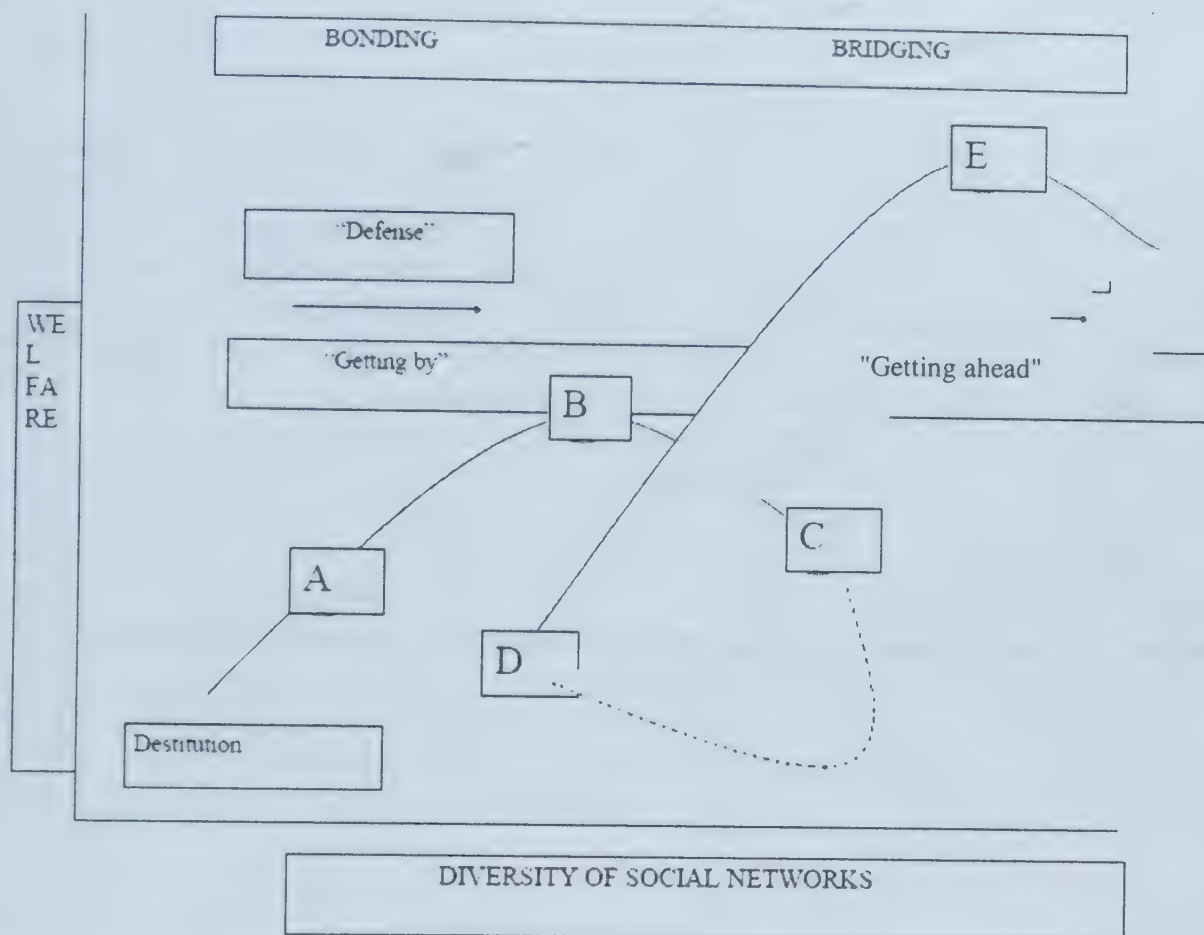


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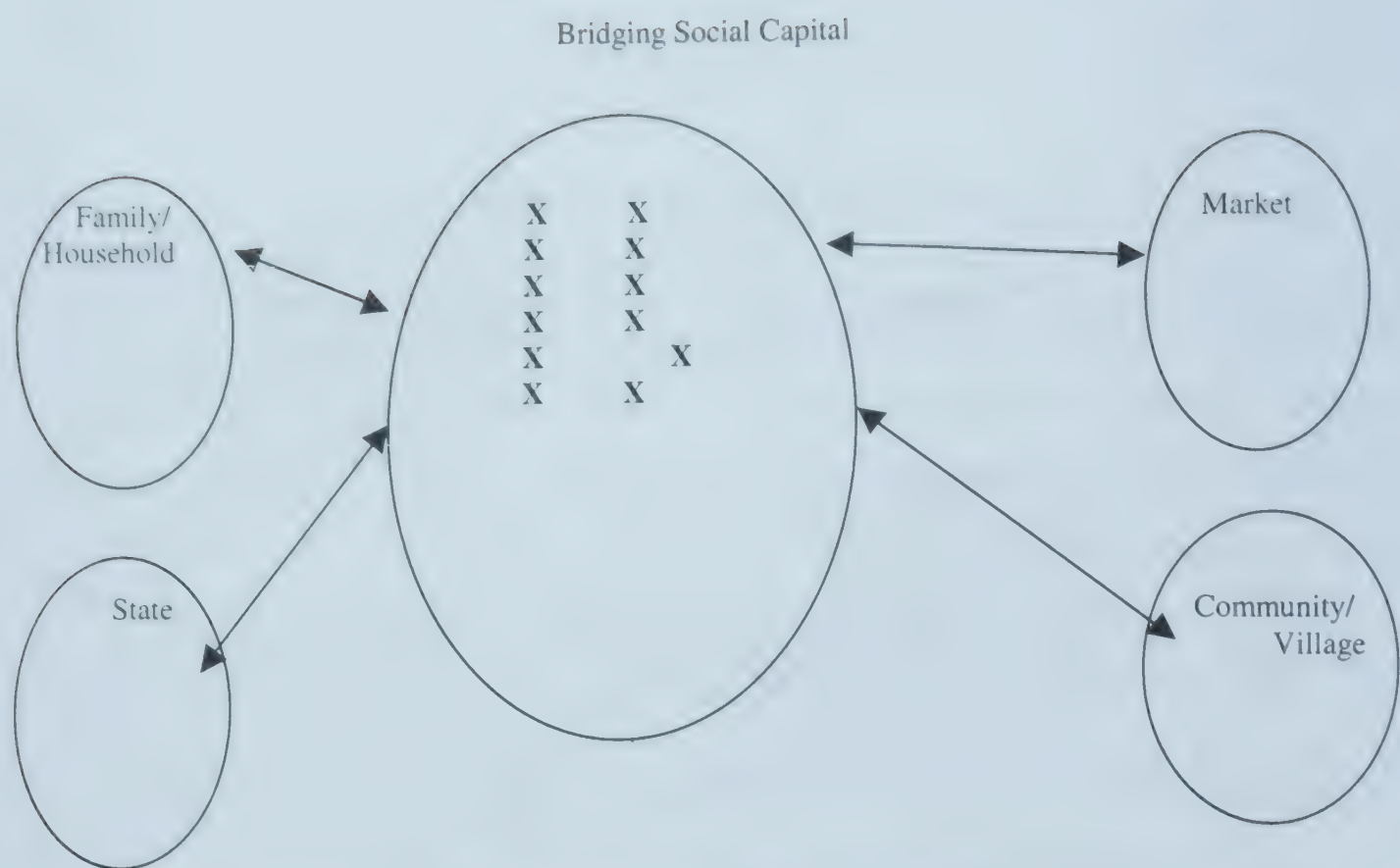
**Figure 2: Social Capital and Poverty Transitions**



Source: Woolcock (1999b)



Diagram 2.



X represents the women in the group. The above diagram represents the networks available to the women at multiples levels.



# Death and Dying: Strategies for Improving Quality of Life of Terminally Ill Patients in India

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## Abstract

How do people approach death and terminal illness? Why it is that better preparation of the loved ones and the young and those that will be left behind is rarely seen as a priority in certain cultures? This paper attempts to understand issues related to coping and the role of the social system and counseling in dealing with terminally ill patients. Based partly on a concept mapping study in a mid sized city it draws on the prevailing attitudes and meanings people have and the sense that they make out of early counseling to avoid too much grief. The paper identifies needs such as coping, a pronounced role of support systems, and developing strengths in the dying patient by sharing the right information about illness so that the patients are realistic. There is reason to believe that a terminally ill patient with sufficient knowledge about the condition assists himself/herself in self- coping and assists the supporters in better coping. There is very little by way of literature in this field in the Indian context and hence this study possibly would be a pioneer in documenting the strengths based coping mechanisms rooted in the culture and psyche of Indian people. Focusing on the strengths in Indian culture the researchers believe that it is possible to perceive dying as a process characterized by more dignity than mystery. Active grief and bereavement counseling, death education, training for effective healing, communication with family and health professionals to improve quality of dying with special focus on terminally ill patients is also highlighted in the Indian context. Finally, a humble attempt is made in this paper to recommend strengthening of hospice and palliative care in India.

## Introduction

Two things that are certain in the world are the process of change or transformation and death. Death is an inevitable part of human existence. Since time immemorial, death has captured the imagination of poets, philosophers, artists, scientists, and lay persons alike, who have used the concept of death to understand and explain the meaning of life. Death and life are two inseparable companions, frequently in dispute, never very far apart as each depends upon the other (Feifel, 1977). Because death is a realm, an "undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns" (William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 1), it is like a mystery which evokes feelings of fear, sadness and doom in us, when we hear or speak of death. It is not the fact of death, but the way we look at death which makes the great difference in coping with this reality. For many, failure to accept the ultimate reality of death may result in mental distress.

Each person's attitude toward death will affect nearly every activity of his or her life. If the attitudinal disposition is marked by a) fear of death to such an extent, that one becomes slave to one's emotions; b) suppression or ignoring of the thought of death by becoming engrossed in living, and; c) accepting death as a reality and preparing for it physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Accepting death as reality and being prepared for it requires deeper understanding of its various aspects, and in turn this would help in coping with this ultimate reality.

Issues relating to coping and the role of the social system and counseling in dealing with terminally ill patients, based on a concept mapping study in Vadodara city of Gujarat state in India forms the discussion in this paper. The researcher interviewed 40 adults from different walks of life - academics,



medical practitioners, entrepreneurs and managers, researchers, spiritual leaders, students from different streams, and lay persons. Perceptions, attitudes and meanings they gave to death and dying and terminal illness were viewed to identify needs such as coping and the possible role of supports for those who are dying and their family members that will be left. Respondent views on issues such as improvements to quality of life as well as preparing for the end of life were sought. There is very little by way of literature in this field in the Indian context and hence this study possibly would be a pioneer in documenting the strengths based coping mechanisms rooted in the culture and psyche of Indian people.

### Views on death and dying

Death is an emotive issue; too sensitive and grave an issue that could not be talked about casually. This was amply evident in the reactions of the study participants, when they were asked to define death, their perceptions about good death and bad death. The question evoked reactions of sadness, awkward laughter, or caused the participants to pause for a while and introspect deeply before replying. Many of them became serious while describing their concept of death in their own words.

### Physiological views of death

- Death was described by some of the participants as cessation of all critical functions of the body and functioning of vital organs and the ability to sense or feel.
- *When your brain and heart stop functioning.*
- *No breathing.*
- *When your nervous system does not respond..*
- *When slowly your body is getting damaged and you can observe that everything is going numb.*
- *When a person slips into a coma.*

### Philosophical views of death

- Many participants were philosophical in their description of death. For them, death was *"the end of life"* or *"the end of physical being (existence)"*, and absence from the world - *"when one is no longer physically present (in the world)"*, which also meant the end of all hope, wishes and desires, and loss of that, one holds dear.
- *It is a stage of life when there is no hope for the future, nothing to look forward to.*
- *It is one's inability to look beyond or wish for as it is the final stage of life.*
- *Death forces you to leave everything behind; it takes everything away from you.*
- Death is perceived as an inevitable, unwanted fact of life, as a "grey area", an unknown dark area, which no one has previously experienced. It is perhaps this perception that evokes fear in people.

### Spiritual views of death

In a spiritual sense, the meaning of death is merely separation of the body from the soul. The soul leaves the body for communion with the Divine. Death marks the beginning of a new life. In the words of a participant, a spiritual leader,

- *Death is akin to moving away from this materialistic world and your soul is meeting with God, the supreme authority. It is moving to a higher level. It is a beginning of new life. It is only end of physical entity of our physical being, when the soul leaves the body'.*
- *'Death' to some meant the end of merely the physical existence and the beginning of a new life. It is part of a continuous process. According to a participant, death is 'not the end, but growth'.*
- *'Death' was also perceived as a great leveler that 'visits everyone without discrimination of caste, class, or gender'.*
- *'Death does not exist'. A participant negated its existence and said, 'Every moment since we took birth on this earth, we are inching towards death'. According to two participants, a person may be*



considered as good as dead, as soon as he or she loses zest for life, desire to live, and interest in all worldly matters, or if the person is outcast by the community.

### Defining 'Good' death and 'Bad' death

According to the participants, a person may be considered as having died a good death, if there is no physical pain or suffering, no physical diseases till one dies. A good death is painless filled with only happy memories. If the person has reached a certain age (70-80 years) and led a fulfilling life, i.e. discharged all worldly responsibilities towards dependents and society, and has cultivated a sense of detachment from the world, has severed emotional attachments and or involvement in worldly affairs or materials, has a cool and calm mental state. Dying well also means no dependence on other including family members, community, and care takers in hospitals, and being treated with dignity by family, relatives, doctors and nurses. Good death is also death with awareness and consciousness such as death due to accident, cardiac arrest, etc. as in such situations there is no prior knowledge of its onset.

The ability to anticipate, predict or even determine the timing of one's own death, figures in Indian mythology and history. Death by self prediction and or determination was considered good death, because one could die when one wishes to die, and death could occur according to one's wish, and pain, suffering and worries about the survivors would have no place due to determinations and cultivation of detachment.

Similarly, according to the participants, a person may be considered as having died a bad death, if he or she lived a very unsatisfied/dissatisfied life. Bad death was also perceived when individuals:

- had bad karma (i.e., has done harm to society)
- experience emotional pain and suffering, and is terrified of dying
- when persons feel helpless and incapacitated, suffer from painful diseases and are hospitalized and fully dependent on others
- are unable to cope with the idea of death or the process of dying
- suffer an undignified, dehumanized death
- suffer bad or ill-treatment (no dignity or honor) at the time of death at the hands of family or the hospital staff at the closing of life
- have no supports or care from the community; have to suffer insensitivity of care takers; and are constantly think about 'would happen to the loved ones?', after their death.

### Perceptions regarding Terminal illness

The word terminal illness is used for incurable diseases leading towards death. Lasagna (1970) considers 'terminal illness as a disease state whose presence rises in the mind of physician, patient or family an expectation of death as a direct consequence of the illness'. This indicates that in a physician's best judgment an identified trouble will cause death. At this stage the focus of doctors and patients changes from attempting to cure the illness or prolong life into trying to provide relief from pain and comfort for the sufferer.

Participants were asked to describe the characteristics of a terminally ill patient to understand how they perceive terminal illness. According to the participants, a terminally ill patient suffers a gradual weakening and cessation of all physical functions of the body, terminally ill patient's body stop responding and it functions slowly, their bodies are weak, it's like break down of their whole nervous system.

According to participants, terminal illness is difficult to accept and usually brings many painful reactions, from both the patients and their families. For a terminally ill patient, it is shocking to accept, that time is running out. For the family members and friends of the patients, caring for the patient is difficult, especially as they are aware that the person is preparing for the final farewell.



Participants felt that dying patients feel a strong sense of sadness as illness dominates their lives, and a number of positive and negative changes set in. They need sympathy along with empathy. They are highly worried about their progress towards death and start imagining problems of their dependents and other survivors after they are gone. They start ruminating on their life style, happy and sad moments, their mistakes and achievements throughout their life, and their behavior to and relationships with others; they start talking about rituals, norms and customs to be followed by their family members, after their death.

Participants also emphasized that the characteristics and reactions of terminally ill patients are dependant on variables such as age, level of maturity, attitude towards life and death, and personal achievements in life. These variables also determine the nature and extent of mental distress faced by the terminally ill.

### **Should terminally ill patients be informed about their condition?**

Usually physicians do not disclose to their patients that they are terminally ill, they do not say that death is probable or inevitable in a particular disease, as there are several studies favoring the decision not to inform the patient. At times many patients themselves are not interested to know neither about recovery nor about occurrence of death, although the number of patients wanting to be fully ignorant about their progress towards dying is small. Glaser and Strauss (1965) believe that ideally the doctor must first confirm that whether the patients really want to know about their terminal stage and make judgments about disclosure of information. Half of the study participants opined that accidental death or sudden death as a good way to die. Hence quite a few participants felt that a person must not be told about his or her imminent death, so as to spare him the shock and pain of facing death, and worries about their survivors. The participants said:

- *'When one is enjoying life and suddenly come's to know that he or she has a fixed time left, that is a shock and such death with full awareness in advance is a very bad death'*
- *'When you are aware about the time left with you, it becomes very painful, shocking and unbearable'*
- *'When you are busy in your work and suddenly you die due to heart attack, you will not have to go through any psychological pain, survivors' tensions or any other dying related issues.'*

Some of the participants felt that regardless of whether or not terminally ill patients are formally informed about their condition, most of them become aware about their stage from the reactions and behavior of people around them. Those who advocated informing terminally ill persons about their condition reasoned that awareness of imminent death was important for a peaceful end, which is a good death. Consciousness about one's death was not only perceived to be important for preparing oneself for it, but necessary for accepting the reality of death, and in turn assisting a person to die peacefully and prepared.

- *Advance planning and preparation may be helpful in dying well if you are aware about your status of disease.*
- *When you are aware about it and prepare about it, than dying becomes more peaceful and easier.*
- *Information regarding remaining time period can be helpful for patients to get ready for the final farewell and assists with acceptance of the last phase of life.*

A wish to spend the remaining time in acts such as disposal of personal possessions, fulfilling wishes, seeking reconciliation for conflicts in their relationships, if any etc. surface as priorities. *'They must be informed so that they can workout property matters; deal with unfulfilled wishes as well as they may try to heal their wounds'*, a participant observed.

Some participants upheld the right of terminally ill persons to have information about their condition, as *everyone has the right to live and die according to their own wish*. One of the participants, a social science researcher, asserted that, *No one has right to decide the time of my death. I may be fighting with this battle. Still I need to be told, otherwise it is a betrayal.*

Several participants believed that a person's reaction to the information about his or her terminal illness and imminent death, was a completely subjective matter, and would depend on the mental make up and



circumstances of that person. Hence, they believed that information should be given, considering factors such as, degree of familiarity with the terminally ill person (*depends on how much you know the dying person*), *circumstances at the time of dying, mental state and consciousness of the patients towards their condition*. Information should be given in consultation with all stakeholders of the patients, *jointly by doctors, nurses, family members and care takers of the patients*. And most important, *the information must be forwarded very skillfully to the patient as well as to their family members, as patients are not mentally prepared for death; it becomes very difficult for them to cope up with this reality at the end of life*.

### **Notion of the last wish:**

Participants were posed a hypothetical question – “If you came to know that you had very little time left in this world, what you would do? How would you like to spend the last days?” Once again, the spontaneous reaction to this question was a mix of emotions - initial shock, surprise, awkward laughter, speechlessness, and even avoidance of the subject. ‘*Oh, no*’, ‘*we have never thought of that*’, ‘*I just don’t know, it is too difficult and painful even to imagine*’, were some of the reactions that the question evoked.

However it was amply clear to many that, when faced with the prospect of death, they would take time out to fulfill their wishes, doing their favourite things that they were unable to give time due to their busy schedules or responsibilities. Other responses were spending time with their loved ones, doing something special and memorable for them, preparing their loved ones for their death, express their feelings, confess their love and mistakes they have made, confide or share secrets, seek forgiveness, say ‘good byes’ and thank all those who were significant people in their lives, were a bunch of other responses. This reflects their need for conciliation, cementing relationships with family, friends and relatives. There were also participants who said they would introspect on their lives, spend time in solitude. A few preferred a quiet exit without informing anyone of their death. Some said they would plan the disposal of their material possessions, property, and precious possessions, while a few declared they would give their possessions to charity. The responses of the participants also clearly showed their preoccupation with ensuring the welfare and well-being of their dependants and loved ones after their death, and their need to die peacefully, untroubled by worries, unfulfilled wishes or unresolved conflicts. The words of a housewife poignantly capture her concern for her family, who is completely dependent on her. The last thing she would do is to:

*.....List out all the important things in the house and where they are kept....Then I will call all my children and teach them importance of our customs and traditions, our values and rituals. I will tell them to live with love and unity....take care of each other after I am gone.*

The response varied according to the age, education and professional background of the participants. Those who were younger were keener on spending their last days in the pursuits of happiness, partying, undertaking fun-filled activities and spending all their earnings.

### **Coping with terminal illness and death**

Participants were asked how terminally ill persons could be helped to cope with their condition and reduce their anxiety about dying. Acceptance of death was regarded as the first step towards dealing with death in a better way: *One must accept and remember that this is the ultimate fact of the life of any organism, that it is the universal law that whoever is born must die*. There was also a view that emphasised the need to see life as a transit journey, as illustrated by a participant:

*‘We need to consider that we have come only on a visit to this planet Earth, and (that) we have to go back to our original home, which is in the universe. We need to be happy about this, just as we would feel happiness when we visit another city for a special work and return to our own city. Just as we would heave a sigh of relief, when we alight at the railway station of our own city, that yes, finally I am back home! -We must be ready to accept that one day- we also have to go back to our original home (the universe), from where we have come, and hence we must enjoy this trip, called life as much as possible’.*



Another participant felt that death must be celebrated just as we celebrate life, i.e., birth. Thus acceptance of death would lead to change in one's attitude towards death, and make the process of dying more peaceful, easier, happier and painless, and less mysterious.

When asked about the possible roles that various sections of society (family and community, health care providers, psychologists and counselors, NGOs and social workers, academicians, corporate sector, government, etc.) could play in improving the quality of life of terminally ill persons, only a few respondents could think of any role for them. The roles they suggested were mostly for health care providers and family members in preparing persons for the end of life. In their view, health care providers could help terminally ill-patients prepare by informing them in a tactful manner about their condition, and treating them with dignity. *Doctors must not inform about patients' condition just by dropping the bombshell on the concerned person by directly saying, your mother is going to die*, said a participant. Family members and the community could help terminally ill patients accept their condition and reduce their anxiety by maintaining a cheerful countenance, by reassuring them that they would be able to handle bereavement well. As one of the participants, a health researcher, suggested, *upsetting facial expressions must be avoided while caring for the terminally ill patients, we must not walk around the patient with a long sad face which has a negative effect on the patient, the environment as well as the mood of every one around the patient*.

Acknowledging and accepting the patients' problems, sorrows, talking, sharing and listening to them, can also help in healing. A participant strongly recommended, *we need to focus on honest expression of our emotions for the patient. Sadness due to this separation is very painful. We must convey all these emotions to the patient and then start helping them to cope with the reality*.

### **Quality of life strategies**

The participants perceived that the quality of life of terminally ill people is compromised by factors such as lack of control over one's own life, the seemingly long wait for death to occur, fear of dying, dissatisfaction with life in general, worries about the welfare of survivors, complete dependence on others on account of illness, ill-treatment or insensitive treatment by care takers (including family, health care providers, and community), the pain and humiliation experienced on account of this, and the feelings of complete worthlessness resulting thereof, and unfulfilled wishes and desires. All these factors contribute to elevating the anxiety level of the terminally ill-patients. Taking into account the prevailing perceptions and attitudes regarding death, dying and terminal illness the researchers suggest the following measures that would contribute to reduction of anxiety, better acceptance of death, and improve quality of life of terminally ill persons.

### **Training for healthcare providers**

A review of the existing curriculum of medical colleges in India points to the gaps in sensitive patient and care giver handling procedures particularly in issues such as death, grief and bereavement. Medical students stand to benefit by increasing their emotional understanding of the patients. Such an approach would compliment their sense of objectivity in consideration of the disease, particularly as they are taught to be emotionally strong as deaths and impending psychological pain is a part of their daily routine. (Lasagna, 1970). Planned in service training in better communication and information strategies about terminal illness to patients and family members, for doctors already in practice would be very useful.

### **Informing terminally ill patients about their condition**

On the basis of the response elicited from the participants and recommended practice relating patient information on their terminal status (Glaser and Strauss, 1965), the researchers feel that the decision to inform should be made by medical practitioners on a case by case basis, after due consideration of the terminally ill patients' situation. An assessment of the prevailing state of mind, strengths and attitude to accept the reality of death, and the capacity of individual patient to deal with the knowledge of their terminal disease, form the basis for making this informed decision, not withstanding its inherent conflict



with the rights of patient to information about their condition. For this, doctors would benefit by training. Such training may include clinical assessment skills and also skills to monitor, minimise the adverse effects that such information could have on the patient as well as their survivors.

### **Active grief and bereavement counseling for families and patients**

Terminal illness has consequences for the patients, family members and other survivors intimately connected with the patient. The participants clearly indicated, that concern and anxiety that terminally ill patients have about their survivor, is an issue. In fact, a conclusive definition of good death from this study is the ability to prepare loved ones for one's death and learning to detach oneself so that one may die peacefully. Therefore it is important to involve the families of terminally ill persons, from the time of disclosure of terminal illness to preparing for the end. As one of the participant said *care with human touch by family members can be very helpful in healing the dying patient*. Few other participants said "Acknowledging, accepting and validating terminally ill patients' doubts and problems, by being with them, sharing one's own feelings and emotions, would also constitute a part of the bereavement process. Waiting for death at the terminal stage is a very painful experience for patients, especially as they have little control of their own lives. For counselors and therapists it is important to consider an in depth analysis of patient's thoughts, apprehensions, and anxieties, about their life, their achievements, and their personality before developing their counseling approaches.

### **Death education**

To break the silence surrounding death, and to dispel fears, and to demystify death (from being perceived as something fearful or bad and to increase acceptance of death as a law of nature), death education could be introduced in schools, so that children may develop a right attitude towards death as adults.

### **Strengthening hospice and palliative care**

A nation wide movement to develop more hospices as health care facilities is needed particularly in India, in order to provide a more meaningful palliative care. Palliative care aims to control distressing pain or symptoms, assist in treatment of terminally ill patients in more homely comfort and has potential to meet spiritual needs of the patients, in addition to providing bereavement counseling. Hospices, much like homes continue routine clinical nursing care and support services to terminally ill persons, apart from lending an atmosphere of pleasantness with gardens, flexible visiting hours, opportunities for fun with family members, relatives and friends of terminally ill and several diversion activities to engage patients in pursuing their hobbies, if they like. In palliative care, religious or cultural practices are respected as patients exercise choices to go and pray to their respective religious beliefs or to participate in important rituals preparing for death, like recitation of the Hindu scriptures of Bhagwad Geeta or scriptures or receive the sacrament from a Christian priest. Patients may be provided services such as transportation from hospital to their family homes, or if they chose to stay at their family home, medical help to enable patients to stay at home and offering bereavement counseling.

The concept of palliative care has not gained much popularity in India and it is still available for specific diseases like final stage of cancer attached to some large specialty hospitals in the country. Little is known about the type and quality of care provided by these hospitals in the absence of impact studies on their strengths and interventions. The researchers recommend that an intervention and outcomes research pilots to test the feasibility and sustainability of palliative care through hospices is needed.

### **Including spiritual discourse on death**

India is a land of tradition of spiritual and faith healing. Its people irrespective of their religious persuasion have strong belief in prayer as a method of healing. This inclination can be positively geared particularly towards the end of life, through discourses from spiritual leaders. This would lead to greater acceptance death and coping with pain, living through suffering and loss and developing active detachment.



## Helping the terminally ill patients in fulfilling their last wishes

Participant responses indicated that people begin to introspect when faced with the prospect of death. As said earlier in the discussion those who are dying have a need, among others, for conciliation, strengthening their ties with family, friends and relatives, resolving conflicts and planning disposal of their possessions. They look for reassurance that their dependents would be taken care of. Listening to their wishes and desires with empathy, and where possible and feasible, helping them to realise these wishes and desires, by communicating these to their family members, could be included as a therapeutic goal and as a strategy to improve their quality of life.

## Conclusions

A veil of silence shrouds the discourse on death. A majority perception as a process marked by pain, suffering and fear, has taken many respondents to explore their philosophical inner core. As the concept mapping research illustrated the notions and meanings attached to good and bad death are important to the acceptance of death. 'Good deaths' make acceptance of the death easier, while 'bad deaths' make acceptance difficult, painful and even traumatic. Acceptance is also the key to coping with the knowledge of impending death and preparing oneself for its occurrence. The belief in past life or karma seems to make the acceptance of death easier. Sharing the right information about illness with the patients is very important so that patients are realistic and accept death. A terminally ill patient with sufficient knowledge about the condition assists himself/herself in self-coping and assists the survivors in better coping.

The researchers believe that it is possible to perceive dying as a process characterised by more dignity than mystery and improve the quality of life of terminally ill patients through training of health care providers in effective communication, active grief and bereavement counseling, death education, and strengthening of hospice and palliative care in India. Given the dearth of research in this area in India, there is a need for further studies also to account for cultural and regional differences in perceptions and attitudes towards death, among terminally ill patients. Additionally studies are needed on existing palliative interventions, in order to test, develop and run pilots that take note of the linguistic, cultural and regional diversity of India. And finally to develop strengths based perspectives of psycho social interventions the first step is to 'LISTEN' to what dying people have to say to enable them to cope better.

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# Strategies For Improving Productivity Of Knowledge Workers - An Overview

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*Knowledge is the awareness and understanding of facts, truths or information gained in the form of experience or learning or through introspection. Two forms of knowledge are there : tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge can be held in a person's mind and explicit knowledge can be held in written documents and procedures. A knowledge worker is anyone who works for a living at the tasks of developing or using knowledge. The basic task in knowledge work is thinking which adds value to work through mental activities. Knowledge workers find and access information from the vast sources of knowledge, uses information to answer questions, solve problems, complete writing assignments, and generate ideas. Knowledge worker's performance can be improved by providing access to relevant information; continuing educational opportunities and a balance between guidance and autonomy. Knowledge worker can use Information Technology (IT) to access, process, store, and disseminate information. IT must be designed to reduce the amount of time knowledge workers spend on information access, management and manipulation. Through mobile and wireless technologies, knowledge workers can make use of previously unproductive time. Through knowledge management an enterprise can push the information to knowledge workers. Web logs are personal publishing tools or networking instruments for knowledge workers. The right combination of e-communication, e-training, e-learning and e-assessment tools can form an environment where knowledge workers can flourish.*

## Introduction

Improving the Productivity of Knowledge Worker is one of the major challenges for the present day Business World. Unlike the blue collar employees who contribute through their muscle power, Knowledge Workers contribute through thinking. The contribution of the blue collar employees can be monitored by monitoring his presence at the work spot and also by observing that whether he is operating the machine or not, whereas the contribution of Knowledge Worker can not be monitored. It is not possible to observe whether the individual is thinking or not. For thinking there is no boundary; the employee may think at work spot, residence, on the way to office or during morning walk or evening walk or any other time. So by monitoring the presence of the Knowledge Worker his contribution can not be ensured. Only when the outcome of thinking comes out, the contribution of the Knowledge Worker can be seen.

Under the circumstances, the supervision of the Knowledge Workers in the conventional way is not possible. The Knowledge Worker has to be given full autonomy, flexible work timing and the target for achieving the result. The organisations should look for various productivity improvement processes & implement those processes for improving the productivity of Knowledge Worker.

## Knowledge

Knowledge is the awareness and understanding of facts, truths or information gained in the form of experience or learning or through introspection (Wikipedia 2006). Knowledge is an appreciation of the possession of interconnected details which, in isolation, are of lesser value. Knowledge is the result of learning (Stuhlman Daniel 2006). Knowledge is the internalization of information, data, and experience. Tacit Knowledge is the personal knowledge resident within the mind, behavior and perceptions of individual members of the organization. Explicit Knowledge is the formal, recorded, or systematic knowledge in the form of scientific formulae, procedures, rules, organizational archives, principles, etc., and can easily be accessed, transmitted, or stored in computer files or hard copy. Knowledge is built up from interaction with the world, and is organised and stored in each individual's mind (The Digital Strategy 2006). It is also stored on an organisational level within the minds of employees and in paper and electronic records. Knowledge can be considered as the distillation of information that has been collected, classified, organized, integrated, abstracted and value added (CEN/TC251, 2006). Knowledge is at a level of abstraction higher than the data, and information on which it is based and can be used to deduce new information and new knowledge. When considering knowledge it is usually in the context of human expertise used in solving problems.

Dorothy Leonard-Barton divided knowledge into three classes - public or scientific knowledge, industry-specific knowledge, and firm-specific knowledge (Alter Allan E 2005). Public knowledge are communicated in professional journals, textbooks, public databases, etc. Industry-specific knowledge is related to the specific industry and is diffused among experts, including suppliers and consultants. Both public and industry-specific knowledge are available to all for a price. Firm-specific knowledge is unique to a particular organisation. They are in both explicit and tacit forms.



## Knowledge Work

There are three key features, which differentiate knowledge-work from other forms of conventional work (Shukla Madhukar 2005). Firstly, while all jobs entail a mix of physical, social and mental work, the basic task in knowledge-work is *thinking* - it is mental work, which adds value to work. Unlike the shopfloor operator who performs physical operations, the knowledge worker adds value to work through mental activities. Knowledge-work involves activities such as analysing and solving problems, deriving conclusions, and applying these conclusions to other situations. Naturally, the effectiveness of the knowledge worker would depend on the mental skills and mastery of certain intellectual discipline and expertise (e.g., knowledge of theoretical frameworks, model-building, problem-solving techniques, etc.). This is a key factor, which distinguishes a punch-key operator sitting in front of a PC terminal from a software programmer.

Secondly, the kind of thinking involved in knowledge-work is not a step-by-step linear mental work. Knowledge worker has to be creative and non-linear in his/her thinking

The third distinctive feature of knowledge-work is that it uses knowledge to produce more knowledge. When the software professional uses his/her knowledge of writing codes to increase the efficiency of the programme, he/she is creating new ways of applying knowledge. Thus, knowledge-work is more than mere application of known knowledge; the outcome of knowledge-work is creation of new knowledge.

## Knowledge Worker

Knowledge workers are obviously non-manual workers and are usually employed by firms to carry out innovative activities. Knowledge Worker is a member of the organization who uses knowledge to be a more productive worker (Stuhlman Daniel 2006). These workers use all varieties of knowledge in the performance of their regular business activities. Everyone who uses any form of recorded knowledge could be considered a knowledge worker. A knowledge worker is anyone who works for a living at the tasks of developing or using knowledge (Creotec 2006). For example, a knowledge worker might be someone who works at any of the tasks of planning, acquiring, searching, analyzing, organising, storing, programming, distributing, marketing, or otherwise contributing to the transformation and commerce of information and those who work at using the knowledge so produced.

A Knowledge Worker is anyone in the organization who uses their brain at some point during the day to accomplish their tasks (PHRED Glossary 2006). We specifically include shop floor workers whose tacit knowledge is often part of the backbone of the organization. Knowledge Worker is a person who has been schooled to use knowledge, theory, and concept, rather than physical force or manual skill (India Infoline 2006). The man/woman who puts to work what he/she has between his/her ears rather than the drawn of his/her muscles or the skill of his/her hands. Knowledge workers use their intellect to convert their ideas into products, services, or processes (Miller WC 1998). A Knowledge worker creates knowledge, knows how to tap and share it across an organisation, and then reuse this knowledge whenever necessary – and he/she usually works against a deadline like yesterday (Stylusinc 2006). Knowledge worker is a problem solver (Western Management Consultants 2002). He/She is a person who uses intellectual rather than manual skills to earn a living. He/She is an individual who requires a high level of autonomy. He/She is a manipulator of symbols; someone paid for quality of judgement rather than speed of work. He/She is a worker who uses unique processes. He/She is someone who possesses un-codified knowledge which is difficult to duplicate. He/She is a worker who sources between his ears. He/She is someone who uses knowledge and information to add to deeper knowledge and information.

## Knowledge Worker Characteristics

Knowledge work is complex, and those who perform it require certain skills and abilities as well as familiarity with actual and theoretical knowledge (Knowledge Workers Forum 2006). These persons must be able to find, access, recall, and apply information, interact well with others, and possess the ability and motivation to acquire and improve these skills. While the importance of one or more of these characteristics may vary from one job to the next, all knowledge workers need the following characteristics :

- a) Possessing factual and theoretical knowledge,
- b) Finding and accessing information,
- c) Ability to apply information,
- d) Communication skills,
- e) Motivation and
- f) Intellectual capabilities.



### ***Possessing Factual and Theoretical Knowledge***

Knowledge workers are conversant with specific factual and theoretical information. School teachers possess information regarding specialized subject matter, teaching strategies, and learning theories. The sales representative commands factual knowledge concerning the product he or she sells and theoretical knowledge about how to interest customers in that product. Prospective knowledge workers may need years of formal education to master the information needed to enter a particular field of work. Because knowledge is always being created, this type of employee will be acquiring additional information on a continual basis.

### ***Finding and Accessing Information***

At a time when the operations of today's information society depends on knowledge that is continually growing and changing, distribution of information within organizations has become problematic due to the massive amount of information with which employees need to be familiar. Knowledge workers must therefore know how to independently identify and find such material. Such employees need to know which sources provide the information they need and how to use these sources in order to locate information successfully.

### ***Ability to Apply Information***

Knowledge workers use information to answer questions, solve problems, complete writing assignments, and generate ideas. Use of analogical reasoning and relevance judgment enables employees to address successfully personal and customer service-related issues. Analogical reasoning is a knowledge-based problem-solving process in which persons apply information from precedents to new situations. Relevance judgment is the process by which individuals decide whether or not a precedent is applicable to the problem at hand. The non-repetitive nature of knowledge workers' jobs makes crucial the ability to apply information to new situations.

### ***Communication Skills***

Knowledge work is characterized by close contact with customers, supervisors, subordinates, and team mates. Successful knowledge workers present clearly, in spoken and written word, both factual and theoretical information. These employees listen with understanding and ask for clarification when they do not understand what is being said to them.

Knowledge workers must be able to speak, read, write, and listen in one-on-one and group settings. Emphasis on quality customer service and customization of goods and services to meet individual customer needs and wants brings knowledge workers into close contact with customers. The goals of organizational effectiveness and continual improvement of products, together with the need to continually consider new information in order to accomplish work, require communication between supervisor and supervised and among team mates or colleagues. Knowledge workers possess communications skills that enable them to collaborate with one another for goal-setting, decision-making, and idea generating purposes.

### ***Motivation***

The nature of knowledge work requires continual growth, in terms of mastery of information and skill development, on the part of those who do this type of work. Knowledge workers must become and remain interested in finding information, memorizing that information, and applying it to their work. Because new technological developments call on knowledge workers to change continuously the way they accomplish their work, these individuals must maintain a desire to apply their talents toward incorporating new information and new technologies into their work.

### ***Intellectual Capabilities***

Knowledge workers must have the intellectual capabilities to acquire the skills discussed above. Such intellectual capacities include those concerned with the understanding, recall, processing and application of specialized information. Persons who perform knowledge work must possess the abilities needed to acquire appropriate communication skills and to learn how to figure out where and how information can be located. Knowledge workers are able to learn how to read and write at post secondary levels and to perform abstract reasoning. They also have the intellectual capacity to understand the value of acquiring and maintaining the knowledge and skills needed to accomplish their work.

### **Knowledge Worker Productivity Improvement Processes**

The following are some of the processes for improving productivity of Knowledge Workers :



- a) E-Learning,
- b) ICT- Enabled Education,
- c) Empowering the Knowledge Worker with Internet Learning,
- d) Information Technology (IT),
- e) Information and communications technology (ICT) & Internet,
- f) Mobile & Wireless ICT,
- g) Integration of IT Related Technologies or Support Groups,
- h) Weblogs,
- i) Knowledge Management (KM) and
- j) Change in Attitude.

### ***E-Learning***

E-learning is any learning that utilizes a network – LAN, WAN or internet – for delivery, interaction, or facilitation (Sao Binod Kumar & Suri Gunmala 2005, pp 60-66). This includes distributed learning, distance learning other than pure correspondence, CBT (computer-based training) delivered over a network; and WBT (web-based training). It can be synchronous, asynchronous, instructor-led or computer-based or a combination. E-learning represents the integration of multimedia, instructor-led and real-time training in a collaborative environment. It is a learning experience that builds knowledge, skills and capabilities using real-time web-enabled technologies. It is about bringing learning to people and not people to learning.

E-Learning has been an area of prime focus, and the top management's commitment for the Aditya Birla group to meet the need to broadbase learning, update skills and ensure personal development (Sao Binod Kumar & Suri Gunmala 2005, pp 68-73). This has been fulfilled by the Institute of Management and Learning, 'Gyanodaya'. The objective of Gyanodaya is to target the management cadre. The Aditya Birla Group started an e-learning initiative on November 27, 2002. The need for e-learning at Gyanodaya is to ensure that more and more people in the Aditya Birla group were in a position to learn and upgrade their skills. A typical e-learning module is followed by a post-module assessment, in which scoring 65 percent is essential for completion of the module. One can only enroll in one module at a time and each module is followed by a feedback form, which is mandatory for each participant. The medium for rolling out these programmes is the group-wide intranet Aditya Disha.

### ***ICT- Enabled Education***

We must focus on education that provides employable skills to our potential workforce in the next ten years if we have to leverage the multitude of opportunities on hand (Adkoli Anand 2006, pp 44-50). Education is key to our future success. Every child must get access to quality education at an affordable price.

It is imperative that we take advantage of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) to achieve this goal.

The core of the proposed solution is to create a National Learning Repository that should be made available to every school, college and academic institution across India. We must create a process that makes it possible to customize instructional materials to meet specific needs and to deliver the materials in multiple formats across any media-print, TV, CD-ROM or web. Education and training providers can better leverage the educational infrastructure being created today, and more importantly get started on our e-education mission.

### ***Empowering the Knowledge Worker with Internet Learning***

Internet learning sets an individual on the path to productivity that benefits an organization in more ways than the mere savings of time and money (Kelly Tom & Nanjiani Nader 2003). The right combination of e-communication, e-training and e-assessment tools can form an environment where knowledge workers flourish. E-communication translates into increased awareness. E-training translates into skills. An advantage of e-learning from an employee's perspective is the opportunity for mastery or self-paced learning.

E-assessment translates into career development. Employees value objective metrics that allow them to demonstrate improvement in their skills. Online examinations, simulations, proctored examinations and certifications are valued by most employees as objective evidence of the knowledge. The empowerment an individual experiences from using productivity tools stimulates risk-taking and entrepreneurship.



## ***Information Technology (IT)***

Management facilitates the knowledge worker's job performance by providing access to relevant information; environments that promote this information's desired use, continuing educational opportunities, and a balance between guidance and autonomy (Knowledge Workers Forum 2006). Employers use costly technologies to facilitate access to and manipulation of information. The term information technology refers to computer equipment and programmes used to access, process, store, and disseminate information. Examples of information technologies include word processing, spreadsheet, and electronic mail programmes, and a variety of other software programs designed to process information in specific ways. Information technologies are designed to reduce the amount of time employees spend on information access, management and manipulation and to increase the accuracy of these processes. Information technology is important because it helps make information accessible and manageable in a time when accessibility and manipulation of information are crucial to the world economy.

## ***Information and communications technology (ICT) & Internet***

The advancement of Information and communications technology (ICT) and the development of the Internet have enabled people to enhance their potential in knowledge work (Alter Allan E 2005). The Internet has expanded the public and industry-specific knowledge. The Knowledge Worker, through the use of ICT and the Internet, has the information of the whole world at his fingertips. ICT and the Internet have also made information easy-to-access, user-friendly and up-to-date. These have to be the results of information system applications, such as powerful information search engines, good databases and data housing, and data mining. The Internet allows the sharing of information across functional, organisational, national and global boundaries. At the firm level, an adequate digital nervous system will enhance employees potential in their knowledge work activities. The Knowledge Worker needs an ICT-enabled work environment to perform adequately in the knowledge-based economy.

## ***Mobile & Wireless ICT***

The emerging mobile and wireless ICT can support the mobile nature of the Knowledge Worker's job (Beru Karin, Hemingway Christopher & Ashurst Colin 2005). These technologies can have considerable impact on working practices, collaboration processes, performance, and productivity. The IT consultants who had adopted a mobile working solution which combined wireless General Packet Radio Service (GPRS) phones, Tablet Personal Computers (PCs), Wireless Local Area Networks (WLANs) in their office buildings, and wireless broadband in their homes achieved considerable personal productivity gains. The personal productivity gains resulted from consultants' ability to make use of previously unproductive time, access corporate information as needed, and communicate via multiple channels regardless of location. The new functionality, particularly of the Tablet PC, afforded the evolution of new working practices by supporting richer social connectivity, more engaging face-to-face interaction, with the technology becoming more a social medium rather than barrier. The emerging mobile and wireless ICT will have a greater impact on productivity due to its ability to support the mobile and collaborative nature of today's Knowledge Workers' job.

A package of mobile technologies can have a significant impact on the personal and collective productivity of a geographically dispersed, mobile team. Personal productivity gains can arise from mobile and wireless technologies that enable Knowledge Workers to communicate in real-time with colleagues and customers via multiple electronic channels regardless of location and the technologies have the flexibility to accommodate a diverse range of personal working styles.

## ***Integration of IT related Technologies or Support Groups***

The organizational support for knowledge work is fragmented and comes from a variety of IT organization, human resources, facilities, organisations and so forth (Davenport Tom 2003). One approach is to integrate the various technologies that knowledge workers use.

Another IT-related approach is to integrate the various support groups for knowledge worker technologies. At most large organisations today, there's one group to support messaging technologies, one for knowledge management, one for personal productivity applications and perhaps another for help on wireless communications devices. The different groups mean that IT is unlikely to develop an integrated approach to helping knowledge workers use these tools effectively.

## ***Weblogs***

Weblogs are personal "diary-like-format" web sites enabled by ease to use tools and open for every one to read (Lilia Efimova 2004). There is a growing cluster of knowledge weblogs used by professional as personal knowledge repositories, learning journals or networking instruments. Used in this context, weblogs address personal needs of a knowledge worker, but they also create an opportunity for others to benefit from having



emergent ideas and personal notes captured in public spaces instead of private collections (Lilia Efimova 2004). From a research perspective, weblogs provide a fertile ground for exploring what knowledge work is and what helps employees to be productive in knowledge intensive environments. For a company employee weblogs provide a unique opportunity to access usually invisible trails of development and flows of ideas (Lilia Efimova 2005). This can result in having a better overview of internal expertise and experts, as well in speeding up innovation as a result of earlier cross-fertilisation of ideas.

### **Knowledge Management (KM)**

Knowledge Management (KM) is the process thorough which organisations generate value from their intellectual and knowledge-based assets. It is the practice of harnessing and exploiting intellectual capital to gain competitive advantage and customer commitment through efficiency, innovation and faster and more effective decision-making. Most often, generating value from such assets involves sharing them among employees, departments and even with other companies in an effort to device best practices.

Intellectual and knowledge-based assets fall into two categories: explicit or tacit. Included among the former are assets such as patents, trademarks, business plans, marketing research and customer lists. Explicit knowledge consists of anything that can be documented, archived and codified, often with the help of IT. Tacit knowledge, or the know-how contained in people's heads, their skills, experience, hard-won insight and intuition, and the trust they have invested and earned in relationships inside and outside of the organisation.

A knowledge worker is an asset that appreciates over time (Sahab S.A. Dr. 2002). An effective KM programme should help a company to foster innovation by encouraging the free flow of ideas and thoughts

### **Change in Attitude**

Making knowledge workers more productive requires change in basic attitude., while making the manual workers more productive only required telling the worker (Drucker P.F. 1999, V.41, # 2, pp 79-94). Furthermore, making knowledge workers more productive requires changes in attitude not only on the part of the individual knowledge worker, but on the part of the whole organization. Drucker identifies six factors that determine knowledge worker productivity as follows:

- (a) Definition of the task,
- (b) Required autonomy of knowledge workers,
- (c) Continuing innovation,
- (d) Continuing learning and continuous teaching,
- (e) Quality of output as signature requirement; Quantity is irrelevant until a quality standard exists and
- (f) Knowledge worker as asset not cost.

### **Conclusion**

By implementing the productivity improvement processes, an organisation can improve the productivity of Knowledge Workers. Knowledge worker's performance and productivity can be improved by providing access to relevant information; environments that promote this information's desired use, continuing educational opportunities, and a balance between guidance and autonomy. Knowledge worker can use Information Technology (IT) to access, process, store, and disseminate information. IT must be designed to reduce the amount of time knowledge workers spend on information access, management and manipulation and to increase the accuracy of these processes. Through mobile and wireless technologies, knowledge workers can make use of previously unproductive time, access corporate information as soon as it is needed, and communicate in real-time with colleagues and customers via multiple electronic channels regardless of location.

Through knowledge management an enterprise gathers, organises, shares and analyses its knowledge in terms of resources, documents, and people skills and can push the information to knowledge workers. Web logs are personal publishing tools, personal knowledge repositories, learning journals or networking instruments for knowledge workers and helps the dissemination of knowledge. The right combination of e-communication, e-training and e-assessment tools can form an environment where knowledge workers can flourish. E-communication translates into increased awareness. E-training translates into skills. E-learning provides opportunity for mastery or self-paced learning. E-assessment translates into career development.



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# Role of Community Participation through JFM for Rural Development in India

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Poor people are both cause and effect of environmental degradation. Environment of poor is more degraded than the rich and the environmental degradation hurts the poor more than the rich. Incomplete property rights reinforce vicious poverty-environment degradation circle and CPRs (Common Property Resources) supplement rural livelihood and act as a safety nets for the poor, seasonally and specially in times of agricultural crises. Scarcity motivates the people more to participate in JFM (Joint Forest Management) and participation improves the welfare of the people. This analysis tries to answer the two important questions: *a) who participates in community forestry (small scale forest management) and what are the determinants of participation? And b) what is the impact of participation (role of non-market institutions-JFM) on household consumption and extent of poverty eradication for rural development?* The evidences and facts in the analysis suggest that the poor people are very much linked to CPRs, thus the protection of those natural resources is essential for reducing the extent of poverty and simultaneously regenerating the environment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In current development discourses it is rather odd to find any discussion about poverty minus the environment or about nature without people. There is much controversy surrounding the poverty-environmental degradation nexus. The predominant school of thought argues that poverty is a major cause of environmental degradation and if policy makers want to address the environmental issues, they must first focus on the poverty problems. Poverty problem is prevalent in most of the developing and underdeveloped countries.

The links between poverty and the environment are conditioned by the interaction of economic, social, demographic and even climatic factors. An examination of India, one of the world's largest and most populous countries, is essentially an examination of a microcosm of the earth. Its populace encompasses the entire range of the income and education spectra, its culture consists of diverse religions, languages, and social systems, and its geography is a sample of almost every terrestrial climatic zone of the planet. It is this variation that makes India's environment so interesting. India holds the dubious honour of suffering from poverty-induced environmental degradation at the same time, pollution from affluence and a rapidly growing industrial sector. In light of this dichotomy, it is a tricky task to understand the complexities behind the state of India's environment. Furthermore, these problems will only be exacerbated in the years to come, as India remains one of the fastest growing countries in the world, in terms of population as well of economy. And what is learned from the Indian development experience will afford other countries valuable insight into the best path to take for environmentally sustainable development.

The first and overriding priority of developing countries is economic and social development and poverty eradication. India, too, recognizes that environmental degradation has social reasons, and that combating poverty is a prerequisite for sustainable development. It has been recognised that the sustainable development approach is the key to a continuous growth of the economy. The government of India has a firm belief that only people's participation can achieve highest level of successful implementation of existing programmes of conservation and environmental protection.

Here we seek to examine the complex interplay of environment and poverty in the context of the role of India's Joint Forest Management (JFM). The whole analysis is organised into five sections. Section II deals with the basic definitions of poverty, environment and, finding the linkages between them. Section III gives the detailed report of community participation and the extent of JFM in India. Section IV examines the advantages of JFM in India. The main findings and the policy suggestions are set out in Section V.

## II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### **Common Definition of Poverty**

Poverty is, in absolute term, the inability of an individual to satisfy certain basic minimum needs for sustained, healthy and reasonably productive living. Conceptually, any attempt at quantifying the incidence of poverty in population requires, taking into account the level and pattern of an individual's personal consumption expenditure as well as their access to social transfers and public provisioning. The proportion of population not able to attain the specified level of expenditure is then segregated as poor.

### **Measures of Poverty**

A variety of descriptive indices are used to measure poverty, but the most common are the headcount index (HCI), poverty gap index (PGI), and squared poverty gap index (SPGI). The headcount index, also called the headcount ratio (HCR), is the most widely used index. If a household spends below a pre-defined level, then it is considered to be poor. The index measures the portion of families below the



poverty line. The HCI is useful since it allows one to calculate the marginal impact of additional spending, output, etc. on the number of people lifted out of poverty. The HCI is specified by,

$$H C I = \frac{H C}{n}$$

Where  $n$  is the total population and  $HC$  is the number of households that satisfy the condition  $y_i < p$ , where  $p$  be the poverty line and  $y_i$  be the expenditure level of an individual or household  $i$  (both measured in the same currency).

A problem with the HCI is that it ignores concerns about the distribution of income among the poor. Consequently, more sophisticated measurements of the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke form are also used when measuring poverty (Foster, Greer, and Thorbecke 1984). The two most common are the PGI and SPGI. The former measures how far poor individuals are from the poverty line. Individuals above the poverty line have a zero poverty gap. The calculation of the PGI is described by,

$$P G I = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{y_i < p} \left( \frac{p - y_i}{p} \right)$$

The HCR and the PGI share a problem: neither is especially sensitive to the destitute. For example, if a poor individual receives an income transfer from a much poorer one (with both of them still below the poverty line), neither index would change.

Higher-order poverty indices such as the SPGI give greater weighting to those further away from the poverty line than the PGI. An observation from Indian poverty research is that the information provided by all three measures is roughly the same.

#### **Present Status of Poverty in India**

Using such an approach the planning commission, Government of India has been estimating the head count ratio at state level, separating for rural and urban areas for over three decades. It is currently adequacy norm of 2400 and 2100 kilo calories per capita per day to define state specific using a minimum consumption expenditure, anchored in an average (food) energy poverty lines, separately for rural and urban areas. These poverty lines are then applied on the NSSO's (National Sample Survey Organization) household consumer expenditure distributions to estimate the proportion and number of poor at state level.

In 1962 Planning Committee first attempted to define an official poverty line for India. At the national level the incidence of poverty on the head count ratio declined from 44.48 per cent in 1983 to 26.10 per cent in 1999-2000. In absolute terms, the number of poor declined from about 323 million in 1983 to 260 million in 1999-2000. While the proportion of poor in the rural areas declined from 45.65 per cent in 1983 to 27.09 per cent in 1999-2000; the decline in urban areas has been from 40.79 per cent to 23.62 per cent during this period. The Tenth Plan (2002-07) has set a target of reduction in poverty ratio by five percentage points to 19.3 per cent by 2007 and 15 percentage points by 2012. The targets for rural and urban poverty in 2007 are 21.1% and 15.1% respectively.

### **III. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT IN INDIA**

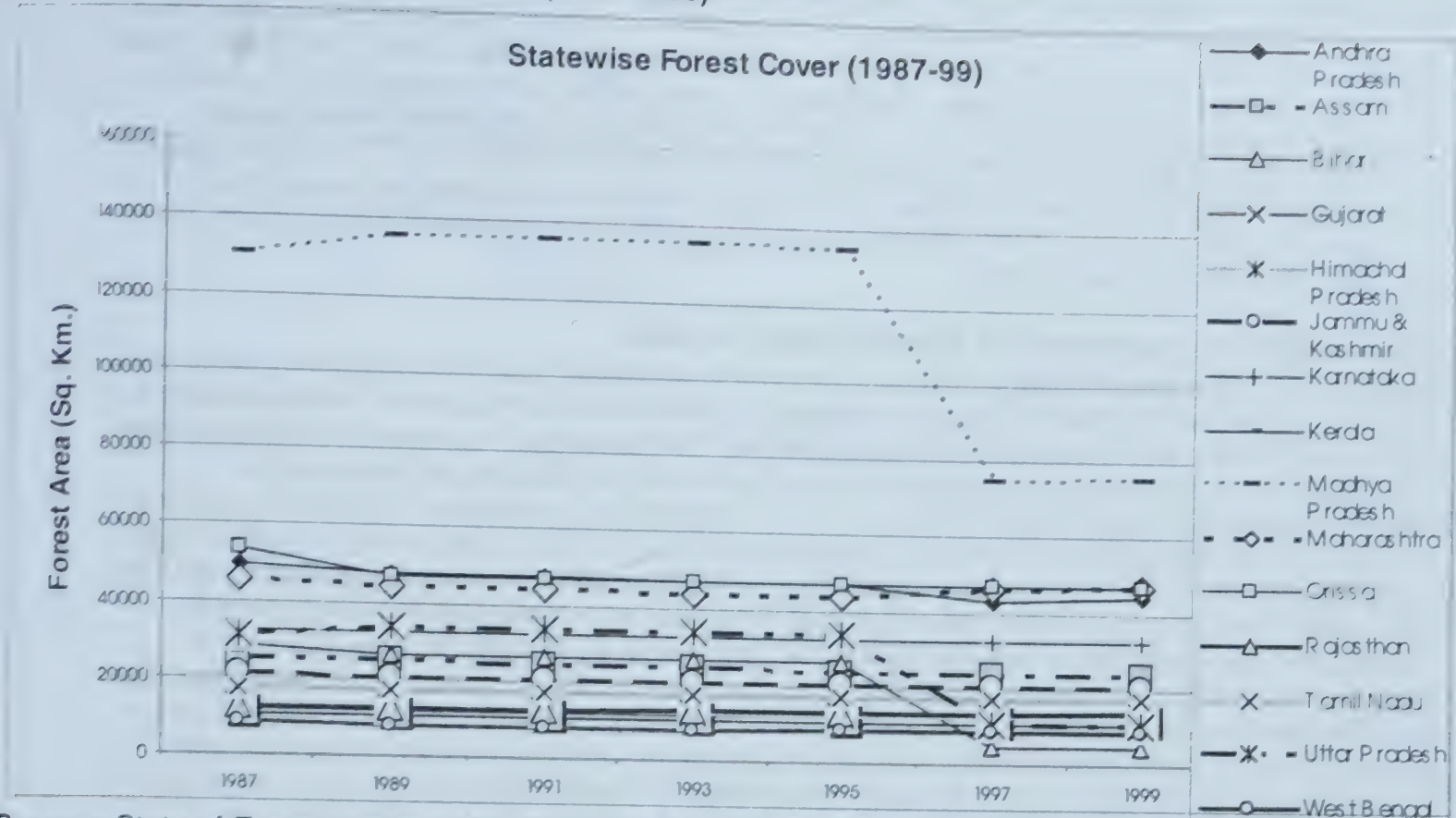
India's national forest policy of 1988 was a landmark policy for local people's rights over forest resources. The policy recognized people's participation in using and protecting forests and suggested the forest communities should develop and conserve forests together with the state forest departments. This reform in forest policy has begun to transform how forests are protected and used in India. Communities that were historically perceived to be encroachers and illegal users of forests by the state were invited to partner with the state in protecting forests. Following national implementation guidelines in 1990, various state governments began implementing their own Joint Forest Management strategies. By 2001, some twenty-two states had adopted JFM (Joint Forest Management) (Agarwal 2001). JFM was launched in the early 1990s and made it possible for the forestry department to involve people and communities in the management of certain forests. JFM caught on very quickly, and by 2001 some 45,000 JFM groups were protecting approximately 12 million hectares of government forests (Kumar, 2002).

The following figures outline the overall position of forest cover in India. The area under forest cover has been fallen from the year 1987 to 1999 and also from sixth five year plan to ninth five year plan in most states. The per capita availability of forest land has been reducing from 1950-51 to 1998-99. Madhya Pradesh is distinctively having the highest forest area cover and this is followed by Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Under the terms of JFM, Village Forest Institutions (VFI) is given conditional access to specified forest products in accordance with the guidelines laid by the forest department. The products usually include fuelwood, fodder, and non-timber forest products. Forest departments also provide VFI's with information, training, and wage employment related to forest management. Initial community funds may also be provided. In many states, JFM resolutions mandate that villagers be solicited to make micro-plans for forests (Sundar 2000). Organizing into a VFI can result in access to wage employment and fuelwood through forest management activities such as lopping, clearing of debris, and cutting. In return, VFIs agree to certain conditions such as collective protection of the forest against encroachment, poaching or timber smuggling, and, monitoring of restrictions on some types of use. After a period of protection (5 to 10 years or more), the VFI and its members are entitled to 25 to 100 percent of the net income from the sale of major forest produce, timber (Khare and others 2002).

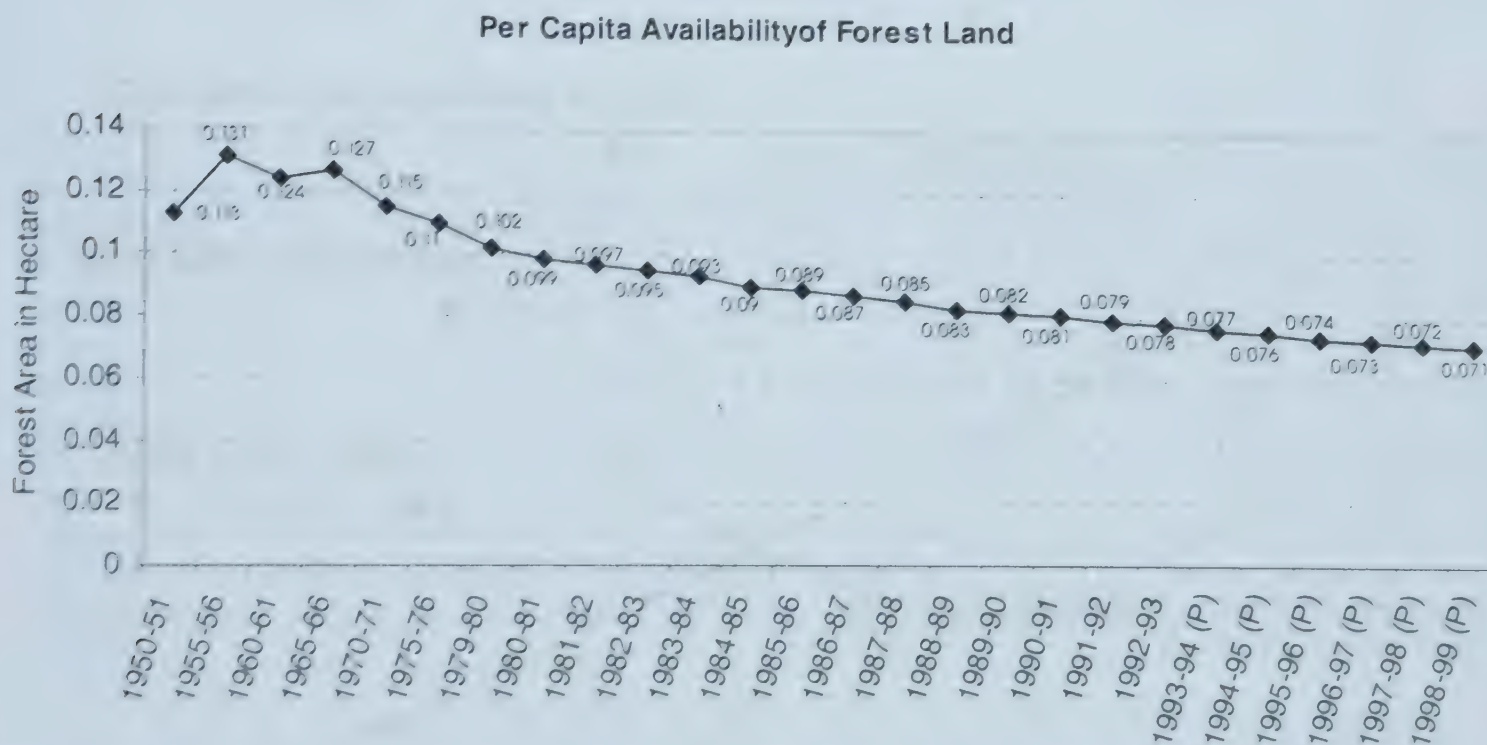


FIG.1: State-wise Forest Cover India (1987-1999)



Source: State of Forest Report 2001, Forest Survey of India, Ministry of Environment and Forest, Govt. of India.

FIG.2: Per Capita Availability of forest Land in India (1950-51 to 1998-99)



Source: Selected Socio-economic Statistics 2002, Central Statistical Organisation, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Govt. of India.

The organization structure and membership rules of VFIs differ in each state. For example, in Andhra Pradesh, all households living in a JFM village are eligible for JFM membership. While membership is optional for the general population of the village, it is automatic for ST and SC households (GOAP 1996). In Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, two persons (one of which must be a woman) from each household living in the JFM village are automatically considered members (GOO 1993 and GOMP 1996). In Uttar Pradesh, membership to JFM is either automatic to the village residents who are registered in the electoral rolls of the village or those who are existing members of the forest panchayat system. In West Bengal, only "economically backward people living in the vicinity of forests" are considered to be members. However, every family living in the vicinity of the forests has the option of becoming a member (GOWB 1990). In general, VFIs have an executive committee that makes major decisions. VFIs have no independent legal existence as they are usually registered with the forest department alone. Authority to enforce protection varies.

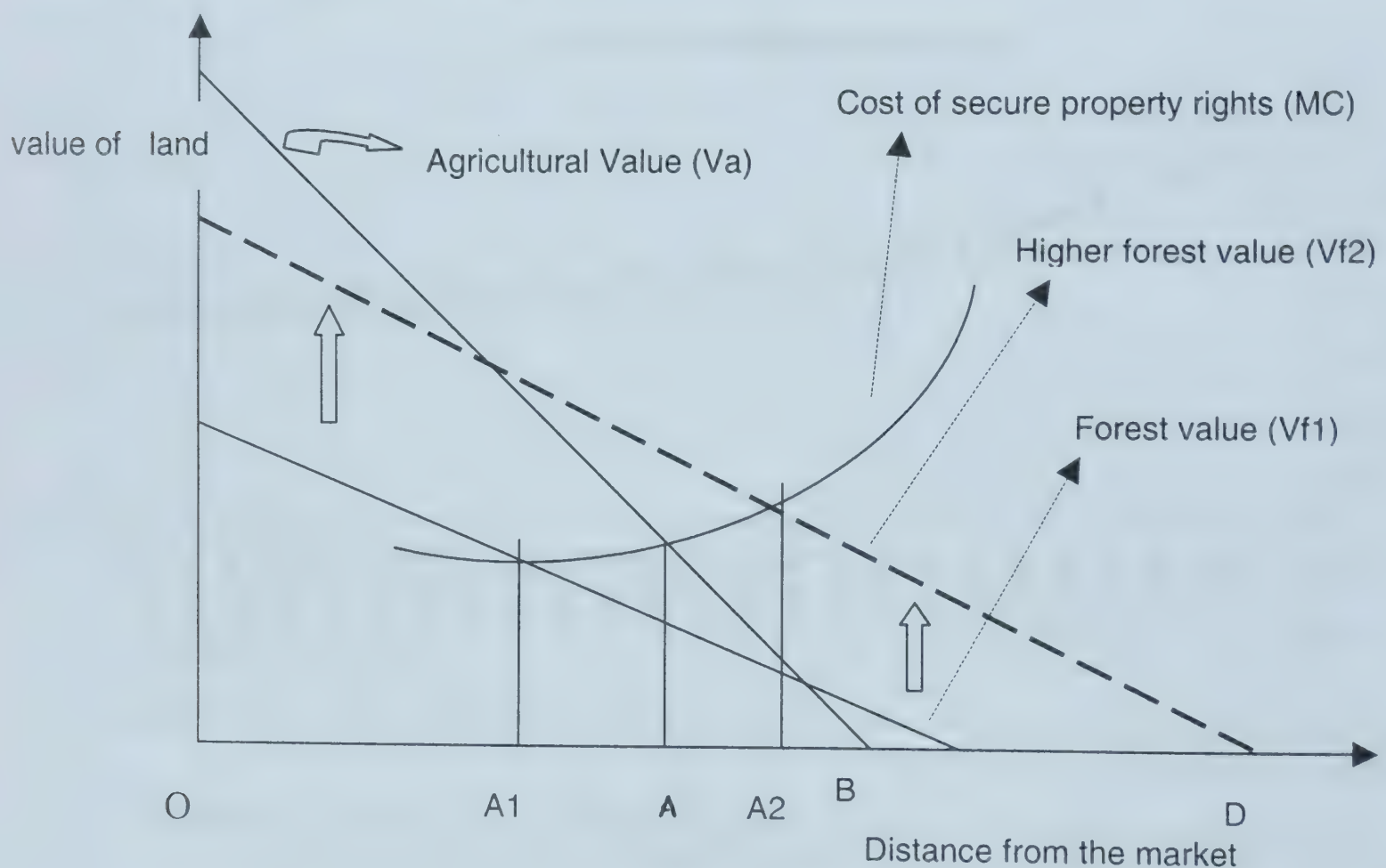


In addition to state supported joint forest management, India has a history of community forest management undertaken either by self-initiated groups, with NGO support, or initiated in colonial times with British support (Khare and others 2000, Ballabh and others 2002, Agarwal 2001, Lise 2000). These 'traditional' groups are particularly evident in the states of Orissa, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. For example, in Orissa, only 1,200 out of the approximately 5,000 community forest management groups are estimated to participate in JFM. (Singh, 2002). It appears that these traditional groups are often not officially recognized under JFM rules, and in many cases are compelled to change their structure and functioning in order to be officially recognized and receive benefits associated with JFM (Sundar 2000, Khare and others 2002).

#### IV. ADVANTAGES OF JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

Some theoretical issues underlying the advocacy for community forestry can be analysed by using the *Von-Thunen conceptual framework of rural landscape*. Consider some homogenous landscape with a local community located at the center 'O' in figure-3 below. The horizontal axis measures distance from the community center or market while the vertical axis measures the value of land employed in agriculture and forestry at any distance. Without the loss of generality, we assume that all households and firms face homogenous inputs with cost of access being the only factor explaining the difference in production costs. In this case, land value in agriculture ( $V_a$ ) decreases with decreasing access. As the distance to the market increases, agricultural land value function eventually falls to zero at point B. Beyond this point, no single farmer will find it profitable to invest in agriculture because the cost of secure property rights exceeds returns on any agricultural investment on the land. This description also applies to the forest value function ( $V_f$ ). Households and firms will protect their ownership rights, crops and livestock at some cost. Secure property rights on agricultural land and property is feasible and enforceable for land in the region O-A<sub>1</sub>. Although households still take advantage of forest resources in the neighbourhood of O-A, investment in them is unprofitable due to high cost of establishing and enforcing property rights on them. As a result, land in the neighbourhood of OA is often used as communal grazing land and for collecting of timber and non-timber forest products under open access.

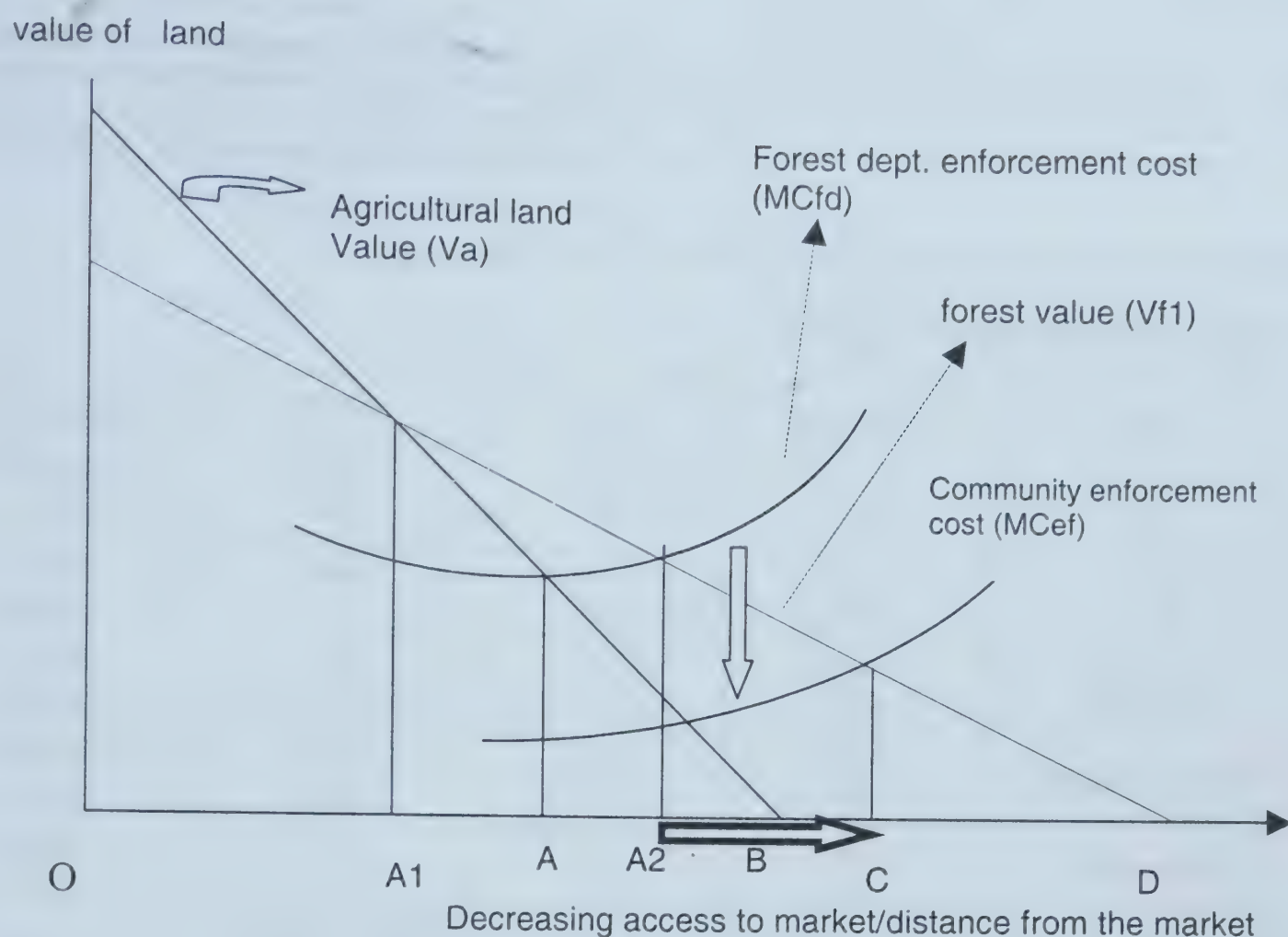
**FIG.3: Forest Land and Property Rights**



At the early stages of rural development, forest products; construction timber, mushroom, firewood, edible caterpillars, etc are plentiful and commands no price (i.e. the shadow value of the resource is zero) and as a result the forest resource is subject to over-exploitation and degradation.



FIG.4: Advantage of Community Forestry



As the neighbourhood forest becomes degraded, forest products become scarce and therefore economically valuable (i.e. the shadow price exceeds zero) and the forest value gradient shifts outwards to  $V_{f2}$  from  $V_{f1}$ . This shift increases land under enforceable property rights from A to  $A_2$ , and the local community can use this additional land either for plantation forestry, agro-forestry or indigenous forest management. Households still rely on open forests for additional forest products for own consumption and for sale. So, they will continue to collect forest products in the region to the right of  $A_2$ . This general description illustrates a key point that some private forest management is possible. It is at this point that we begin to examine community or Joint Forest management and discuss its advantages basically for any community that fits this theoretical description. Most natural forests are located on customary lands surrounding local communities and far from government local and central offices, a feature that makes government an 'absentee landlord'. Moreover, government officers including forest officers at district level will not have the same knowledge about the resource and local community that the local landowner has. This means that local forest management will be less expensive if managed by the local community than by any government ministry.

Figure-4 reproduces figure-3 with two cost functions of indigenous forest management, one for the Forest Department ( $MC_{fd}$ ) and the other for local community management or JFM ( $MC_{ef}$ ). Apart from its potential to reduce the costs of management, local community management also brings more forest land under sustainable management depicted by distance,  $A_2$ -C.

How much forestland can effectively be managed at the local level depends, to a large extent, on the strength of collective action, which in turn depends on factors that influence the marginal cost and benefits of collective management.

The data set is taken from the fifty-fourth round of India's National Sample Survey (NSS), undertaken between January and June of 1998. The fifty-fourth round was the first national survey in which household and village level information was collected regarding common property rights and resources in India. The survey focused only on rural India. (Chopra and Dasgupta, 2003)

To focus on the nature of dependence of the households on natural resources and CPRs, four major states (Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra) are considered. These states are selected on the basis of the level of development, both agricultural and industrial. States are ranked according to per capita income from agriculture and industry respectively. The four states with the highest ranks of income from agriculture are: Punjab, Haryana, Karnataka and Gujarat. The lower



ranking states with regard to agricultural income per capita are: Bihar, Tamil Nadu Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. With respect to industry, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat are the most developed and Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are the least developed. Using further the criteria of the significance of CPRs in the economies of the states, we have selected Karnataka and Bihar as the agriculturally developed and backward states, respectively, and Maharashtra as the industrially developed state. Madhya Pradesh, the central Indian state with a large plateau and forest region inhabited by tribal communities is selected as the fourth Indian state.

**TABLE 1: Distribution of Households collecting from Commons**

(Number and percentage of households)

State	Fuelwood	Fodder	NTFPs	State Total
India	24744 (36)	6450 (9)	9365 (14)	67674 (100)
Bihar	2977 (40)	1117 (15)	582 (7)	7482 (100)
Karnataka	1666 (53)	539 (17)	304 (10)	3161 (100)
Madhya Pradesh	3184 (55)	516 (9)	1408 (24)	5812 (100)
Maharashtra	3222 (60)	679 (13)	514 (9)	5374 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses denote percentage of households in each category

Source: NSSO 54<sup>th</sup> Round

This table indicates the nature of dependence of households in these states on CPRs as measured by number of households collecting each of the three commodities, fuelwood, fodder and NTFPs. Large numbers collect fuelwood from the commons in all four states, the percentage varying from 40% to 60%, while the average for India is 36%. The percentage of household collecting fodder is lower, ranging from 9% for India to 17% for Karnataka. NTFP collection also involves low percentages of households, with the range varying from 7% to 24%, Madhya Pradesh having the highest percentage at 24%.

**TABLE 2: NTFPs Collected and percentage distribution of collected items**

State/ NTFP	India	Bihar	Karna- taka	Madhya Pradesh	Maha- rashtra
1. Fruits	17.86	15.48	31.03	28.21	25.29
2. Roots, Tubers, spinach, etc.	9.10	14.22	1.59	7.93	0.33
3. Gums & resins	0.61	-	-	1.65	0.16
4. Honey	2.96	1.83	9.28	2.21	2.30
5. Medicinal/herbs	2.72	0.69	-	2.38	0.49
6. Fish	16.93	19.72	11.41	4.96	16.91
7. Leaves	26.51	28.78	10.34	43.28	29.72
8. Weeds, Grass, Cane, Bamboo	23.31	19.27	36.34	9.38	24.79

Note: column totals equal 100

Source: NSSO 54<sup>th</sup> Round (1999)

Table-2 gives a picture of the range of non-timber forest products collected in the states and in the country as a whole. At the all India level, leaves, weeds, cane grass, bamboo constitute a large part of total collections. These are followed by fruit and fish. Maharashtra and Bihar follow the same pattern but in Karnataka, cane grass and bamboo are more significant than leaves. In Madhya Pradesh where 24% of households are engaged in NTFP collections, 43.28% of the collections consist of leaves (possibly tendu leaves for bidi making contribute significantly to this).

#### Comparison of Mean Differences between Community Forestry Groups

This method essentially involves comparing the mean fuelwood consumption between two groups of households and villages: those participating in community forestry and the non-participants. The differences in mean consumption between the two groups are expected to capture the impact of



participation. A significant t-test suggests that community forestry increases mean consumption and household welfare.

RESULTS

In this section we outline the results on village and household participation and their determinants as well as the impact of participation on fuelwood consumption.

Table 3: Village Participation in Community Forestry

Summary statistics of village level variables				
Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
CF Village	0.08	0.27	0	1
Andhra Pradesh	0.17	0.38	0	1
Madhya Pradesh	0.20	0.40	0	1
Orissa	0.27	0.44	0	1
Uttar Pradesh	0.31	0.46	0	1
West Bengal	0.06	0.23	0	1
Forest Dummy	0.43	0.50	0	1
Forest Outside Village Within Reach Dummy	0.50	0.50	0	1
All Weather Road Dummy	0.64	0.48	0	1
Middle School Education Dummy	0.73	0.44	0	1
Self Help Group Dummy	0.15	0.36	0	1
Majority Fuelwood Dependent Dummy	0.37	0.48	0	1
Gini Coefficient for land possessed in village	0.51	0.17	0	0.92

Total number of villages 524

Source: NSSO 54<sup>th</sup> Round (1999)

The summary statistics of the village level variables used are in table 3. The mean column for the dummy variables represents the proportion of villages where that dummy variable takes the value one. For example, 8 percent of the 524 villages report presence of CF, while 43 percent report having government forests within the village. In an average village and 37 percent of the villages reported that majority of the residents depended on fuelwood as fuel.

Explanatory variables that are not statistically significant in explaining the probability of CF participation are important too. For example, anecdotal evidence suggests villages with access to forests outside their boundary may choose to protect their own forests and exploit those outside. Thus, such villages may be more likely to participate in the CF program. However, our results do not support this hypothesis.

Table 4 shows the results of ordinary least square regression (OLS). The most important results regarding CF on fuelwood consumption are presented here. We find that households residing in CF villages consume as much fuelwood as those residing in non-CF villages (see Appendix). However, households that participate in CF consume significantly more fuelwood as compared with the households that do not participate. This implies the CF program does not benefit all residents of the CF village in terms of higher fuelwood consumption. However, the program does benefit the participant household. Since CF participant households consume more fuelwood, we conclude that these households have greater access to fuelwood as compared with households who do not participate in the CF program.

Table 4: Household fuelwood consumption analysis, OLS method		
Dependent Variable: Annual Fuelwood Consumption	OLS Coefficient	Standard Errors
Constant	1043.67**	118.49
Andhra Pradesh	-251.87**	78.79
Madhya Pradesh	-324.66**	82.35
Uttar Pradesh	-530.83**	80.05
West Bengal	-444.41**	94.88
Fuelwood used for consumption & enterprise	209.25	130.89
Self Employed in Non-Agriculture	-35.85	51.20
Agricultural Labor	109.29**	32.44
Non-Agricultural Labor	59.08	69.16
Other Non Agricultural Occupation	-165.88**	46.95



Asset Index	-40.84**	14.85
Read Newspaper Dummy	-242.48**	44.75
Fuelwood Price (Rs/Kg)	-398.35**	71.83
Total Govt Forest Area (ha)	0.22*	0.11
Total Village Common Land (ha)	0.21*	0.10
All Weather Road Dummy	-37.58	48.51
CF Village	59.76	101.95
Households Participating in CF	28.82	109.98
N	8307	
R Squared / Log likelihood	0.16	
Notes: ** significant at 1 percent, * significant at 5 percent, + significant at 10 percent		

Among other factors that determine fuelwood consumption, household occupation plays a role. As compared with households self employed in agriculture, the agricultural labour households consume more fuelwood and households in other non-agricultural occupations consume less. Given different opportunity costs of fuelwood collection, the differences in fuelwood consumption between different occupational categories are expected.

Ownership of land, phone, radio, and TV reflect greater wealth of the households. The *asset index* is based on the principal components of these assets and is associated with lower consumption of fuelwood. Education reflected by readers of newspaper in the households may increase the opportunity costs of fuelwood collection and has a negative relationship with fuelwood consumption.

Households with more members consume more fuelwood. The coefficient of fuelwood price is negative, large, and statistically significant. Thus, we cannot reject the hypothesis that the village fuelwood price reflects relative fuelwood scarcity. Total government forest and total village common are both sources of fuelwood, and, larger areas may reflect larger supply of fuelwood (given forest quality). We find that households in villages with larger forest and village commons consume more fuelwood.

#### Impact of participation on fuelwood consumption

The table 5 identifies simple mean differences in fuelwood consumption between participating and non-participating households and villages. Our results show that households who report that they participate in community forestry consume almost 260 kgs more fuelwood than households that do not participate. This difference is statistically significant. Further, average fuelwood consumption in villages that are CF villages is 27 percent greater than that in non-CF villages. Among CF participants, households that do not read newspapers consume four times more fuelwood as compared with households that read newspapers.

Table 5: Average differences in fuelwood consumption for Participating households and CF villages (Mean Difference comparison)		
Firewood Consumption	Households	CF Villages
Fuelwood consumption	259**	202*
<b>For participant only:</b>		
Asset non-poor	80	
Do not read newspaper	829**	
Notes: ** significant at 1 percent, * significant at 5 percent. Asset poor households are defined as those in the bottom two quintiles of the asset index constructed from possessed land and other assets.		

## V. CONCLUSION

To summarize our main household level results, we find that household participation in CF is influenced by state geographic and policy differences, literacy, fuel wood scarcity. A key policy relevant result is that scarcity is correlated with participation. This suggests that new government guidelines need to be cautiously implemented. Our findings regarding fuel wood consumption reinforce the poverty-environment hypothesis, which suggests that fuel wood collection will decrease with wealth because of increased opportunity costs of labour and changes in preferences (Bardhan and others 2002). Community forestry and JFM in India appear to be a case where some participants actively join a village forest institution and are rewarded for their membership. Households who do not join, i.e., those who do not claim to be participants - either because it is not important to them, or because of ignorance, or for some other reason - do not gain in the short to medium term. We conclude that programs designed to increase participation in community forestry are important.

The above evidences and facts suggest that the poor people are very much linked to CPRs, thus the protection of those natural resources is essential for reducing the extent of poverty and simultaneously regenerating the environment, so that sustainable development can be achieved. In conclusion, it can be suggested that for the success of non-market institutions in reducing poverty and improving the environmental quality in developing countries, one not only seek the will for participation,



decentralisation, participatory governance, administrative reforms and role of international development organisations, but also quite essentially the political will and commitment.

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# Voices of Invisibles: Coping responses of Men who Have Sex with Men (MSM)

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*An improved understanding of the psychosocial experience of Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) is crucial for creating a scientific reference base for intervention strategies. A study of the coping responses of MSM suggests that most find it difficult to find a comfortable fit between their psychological and emotional needs and the demands of their social environment. This often leads to different stresses in the life course of MSM which demand specific coping strategies. This paper is organized around psychosocial aspects over which MSM experience stress and their coping responses. It is based on a study of 250 case studies of MSM and 4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The paper discusses multiple stressors such as awareness of one's sexuality, first sexual experience, pressure of marriage, labelling and comments from others, and partner's marriage. It discusses generic coping responses such as internalization of homophobia as a result of self hatred and unacceptability of one's sexuality in society, seeking information on sexuality from peers, networks with support groups, coming out, tolerance of discrimination & abuse, accept/neglect labels, social isolation, multiple sexual partners and addictions. It also identifies common emotional responses such as shame, guilt and secrecy of one's sexuality, fear of being exposed, self hatred, confusion with identity and depression.*

## Introduction:

### Men who have Sex with Men in India: a brief overview

Religious as well as non religious writings from the Vedic and ancient period show that intense and passionate relationships between men and between women have always existed in India. In some periods and places, homosexuality was considered to be very natural and an inevitable emotional aspect of human sexual life. For this reason, homosexual relationships were accepted and nobody paid much attention to them. For example, Pradhan, Ayyar and Bagadia (1982a, p.182) note that 'Homosexuality was not a condemned mode of sexual gratification when the temple sculptors of Konark and Khajuraho were depicting it in stone for all posterity to see. Contrarily there have been other periods and places where homosexual love has been punished and those who practiced it have been humiliated as unnatural and abnormal.

The phrase "Men who have Sex with Men" (MSM) refers to those who engage in sexual relationships exclusively with other men (homosexuality) or who engage in sex relations with either men or women (bisexuality). It is a phrase that was coined in the early part of the 1990s when many new HIV infections were identified among those who were behaviourally homosexual in Western & Asian countries. Even though historical evidences of homosexuality existed in many of these countries homosexuality was socially and / or legally not accepted and HIV prevention programmes for this population were not forthcoming. In the global programme on AIDS conference in Geneva (1992-93) governments accepted the behavioural phrase "men who have sex with men" as a depoliticized euphemism. The phrase "men who have sex with men" is a collective social identity for all men who have sex with other men irrespective of how they might identify themselves.

Men who have sex with other men in India are diverse in their sexual identities. Some identify with the modern 'gay' or 'bisexual' identity while others identify with indigenous sexual identities like 'koti'/'dhurani' - feminized male, usually a sexually passive partner; or 'Panthi'/'parikh' or 'Giriya'- masculine male and usually a sexually active partner. 'Double-decker'/dupli (DD) refers to those who penetrate their partners and are penetrated by their partners. 'Panthi'/'parikh' or 'giriya' and "DD" are labels and usually not 'identities'. In the recent past, some men have started identifying themselves as 'MSM' in a way that suggests the term MSM is becoming another identity. Along with these, there are other men who have sex with men in different contexts and social environments, including truck drivers, migrant workers, maliswala- massage boys, gym boys, film extras etc. Most of these sexual identities are defined on the basis of the sexual role adopted by partners and /or the relative power between the partners which is determined by factors like economic status, age difference and the social environment in which sex takes place (Sharry Joseph, 2004). Most of the research conducted with regard to men who have sex with men agrees that these identities are fluid and depend upon the social environment in which they are expressed.

Data from a survey on Men who have Sex with Men and HIV conducted by London based Panos Institute in 1996 estimates that more than 50 percent of men in India have had a same sex encounter in their lifetime (Purkayastha,1997). The National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), through its counterparts in the states/Union Territories, is mapping high risk behavior populations in India. Data from 32 States/UTs show a population of 1, 48,327 men who have sex with men and 2,859 MSM sites-places where some of these men come to search for partners, including gardens, bus depots, railway stations, and open fields.

The current understanding of human sexuality is that homosexuality and heterosexuality are not bipolar watertight compartments, and that human sexuality exists on a continuum of exclusive homosexuality to exclusive



heterosexuality. Individual sexuality can be placed at any point in this continuum at a given point of time and it may change across the life cycle of the individual.

Often cultural, social, and ideological systems deny and stigmatise any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, identity, relationship or community. Heterocentrism is the often-unconscious attitude that heterosexuality is the norm by which all human experience is to be measured. Under this discourse, procreative heterosexuality becomes the normative process and homosexuality becomes 'abnormal'. Heterocentrism in India generally implies that individuals, irrespective of their sexual orientation, must be pressured and coerced into heterosexual behaviour: marriage and procreation, with the production of a boy child especially valued. Men who have sex with men in India are victims of homophobia, heterosexism, homocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality.

### **Scholarship on Homosexuality in India:**

Very little is known about male homosexuality in India (Nag, 1994:525). Knowledge on this subject comes from four types of research: the first type includes sexual behaviour and /or attitude studies conducted on general population groups (Abraham and Kumar, 1999; Basu, 1994; Goparaju, 1994; Savara and Sridhar, 1992, 1994; Sethi et al., 1995; tejpai, 1996). These studies provide an overview of the prevalence of homosexual behaviour in the general population. The second type of study includes studies conducted on specific groups like street children, truck drivers or people attending health/Sexually Transmitted Illness clinics (Ahmed, 1992; Narayan: 1984; Narayan and Rajshekhar, 1998; Rao et al., 1994; Singh et al., 1992;

Srivastava, 1974). This research was conducted mostly in the context of HIV/AIDS and STD. The third type of research includes studies exclusively on men who have sex with men (Devi, 1977; Humsafar, 2000; Jafar, 2000; Kala, 1992; Kavi, 1993; Khan, 1994; Oostvogels and Menon, 1993; Purkayastha et al. 1997; Seabrook, 1999). These studies primarily had been on the nature, extent, frequency of same sex contacts, the context in which same sex acts take place and so on, rather than on the correlates of their behaviour. The fourth type of research includes research completed by Indian academicians in the field of Psychology and Psychiatry.

Such studies were based on case studies, part of therapeutic treatment (Rangaswamy and Nammalvar, 1982; Rao and Ramasubramaniam, 1983; Gupta, 1989; Pradhan et al., 1982a, b,; Mehta and Nimgaonkar, 1983; and Jiloha, 1984).

It is clear that all four types of studies are limited in their understanding of men who have sex with men. None of them view a homosexual person as an individual confronted with stress of a psychosocial and sexual nature, living in a homophobic social environment with specific needs and problems.

Indian academicians in the field of psychiatry and psychology have preserved an almost complete silence on the subject of homosexuality, notwithstanding that the subject has a history of at least three thousand years in this land. Indian behavioural scientist, psychologist and psychiatrists have avoided writing on homosexuality and thus there is a dearth of scientific studies on the subject from the perspective of mental health.

### **Research Methodology:**

The study was conducted using case study and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method. The sample of the present study consisted of 250 self identified homosexual and bisexual men with differing sexual identities. These included the self identified Kothi (150), Panthi (50) - a term that is usually applied by koti to active partner and Bisexual (50). Their age range was from 21 to 51 years and all came from Baroda. Four FGDs were conducted with the group of 7-8 members in each group. FGD guideline discussing coping responses to psychosocial situations prepared.

### **Results & Discussions:**

The public mental health system in India follows the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) diagnostic classificatory system and Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) which has not considered homosexuality as abnormal behaviour since 1974. Homosexuality, like heterosexuality, is considered to fall within the range of normal human sexual behaviour. Often social and cultural aspects contribute significantly to the psychological and emotional wellbeing of homosexual men and frequently make them vulnerable to psychiatric morbidities. Therefore it is essential to know the psycho-socio-cultural issues and to strategically address them with urgency. Sexual health promotion programmes targeting men who have sex with men will be more sustainable in risk reduction and behaviour changes if psychosocial issues are addressed appropriately.

### **Childhood Experiences:**

An analysis of the 250 case studies suggests that children who are homosexual in their sexual orientation often develop an awareness of "being different" at an early stage. They may or may not understand the sexual nature or precise meaning of their difference. A conscious sense of same sex attraction, which is not common and is



unacceptable in our society, often leads to stress. This is a time when boys are developing their sexual identity, learning to relate sexually with others and experimenting with different sexual behaviours. It is also a time when males may be more reluctant to seek information on sexuality. The modal age of a male's first sexual experience ranges between the ages of 7 to 19 years, which is the age of adolescence. The situation may be more stressful for young men who are afraid to express their homosexual feelings and experiences and to be honest about their sexuality in a homophobic environment. Some of the coping responses reported include seeking information from peers, books, magazines with homosexual content, and from assistive organizations.

The study also exposed significant levels of sexual abuse of Koti (feminized males) from early childhood to adulthood. 72% of the subjects reported that they have been sexually abused in childhood. Case study data shows that 35% of the subjects were physically abused by relatives, 25% of subjects were abused by friends and 12% of the respondents reported that they were abused by the police. All of the subjects reporting sexual abuse said that they had been sexually abused because they were effeminate. Commonly observed coping strategies to such situations or experiences are social isolation, tolerance and telling to close friends or relatives.

The literature indicates an enhanced HIV risk for those with histories of childhood sexual abuse (Alters et al., 1994; Carballo-Diegues & Doleal, 1995; Casses, 1993; Cunningham, Stiffim and Garls, 1994; Etifson, Boles, & Sweat, 1993; Lodico & Diclements, 1994; Zierler et al. 1991). Childhood sexual abuse may lead to frustration and a violation of a child's sense of personal boundaries. It may impact affective relationships significantly. Such experiences may foster a sense of isolation creating a perspective of the world that is harsh and dangerous. This in turn may create a spiral of difficulties whereby MSM may take enormous risks to belong or to avoid abandonment.

Childhood experiences may also contribute to the development of a sense of shame which reinforces internalization of homophobia and has a serious impact upon their ability to establish positive self esteem. 60% of the subjects reported feelings of shame, self hatred and guilt after being sexually abused. Those who were not sexually abused (28%) reported feelings of shame and guilt after their first sexual contact. Approximately 75% of those who identified as koti reported confusion with their homosexuality (sexual identity) and their effeminate behaviour.

### **Societal Homophobia:**

All homosexual men, like heterosexual men, are raised in a homophobic society. Such societal homophobia mobilizes other psychological processes that extend beyond the development of prejudice, stigma and discrimination. For example, one man reported suffering such derogatory terms as 'guud' 'sister', 'homo' or 'halwa' since childhood. Later, he attributed the same words to himself and it was stressful. One of the most commonly seen adaptation strategies amongst men who have sex with men is internalised homophobia i.e. incorporation of negative feelings into their self-image.

Internal homophobia has various expressions. The overt type is present in persons who consciously accuse themselves of being involved in immoral/ sinful activities (55%). Some of them engaged in substance abuse such as alcohol use, tobacco, and 20% showed use of drugs, or other self destructive behaviours such as cutting veins (20%) and other attempts at suicide (35%). The covert type of internalized homophobia presented among those individuals who accepted their sexuality, yet sabotage their own efforts in a variety of subtle ways. For instance, 65% of respondents/participants abandoned their studies and career goals. This self sabotage can also take the form of tolerating discriminatory or abusive treatment from other.

Internalization of homophobia often results in self hatred and feeling of worthlessness and being abnormal. Four (4) subjects desired to change their sexual orientation. A common response is internalization of homophobia, which often results in sanctioning social contacts or becoming socially isolated and developing a negative self image. As these individuals grow and mature, they develop a considerable negative social reaction to it. Coping responses to such homophobia include acceptance of normative heterosexist ideology, networking with other homosexual men, membership of support groups (80%), secrecy of one's orientation (75%) and attempting to change their sexual orientation (10%).

It is expected in our society that all people should get married heterosexually and start a family in order to be considered "complete adults". The assumption is that all people are heterosexual and that marriage and family life will fulfil all personal social and sexual needs. Hence, most of the homosexual men in this study group (80%) are heterosexually married.

Many subjects revealed that they wish to marry heterosexually because they want to be accepted within society and cannot go against their parents wish. This is evident from the following remarks:

".... I want to marry because my parents force me and if I disclose my sexual orientation, my parents would be unhappy, I always turn out to be good son, parents may accept me but society would not accept me; I know that society is not going to change for me, all will be happy with my decision to marry, Homosexuality is a passing phase, marriage would help me."



Many homosexual men marry thinking that their homosexuality will be cured by it. However, homosexuality urges draw these men to secluded sexual encounters, producing guilt and the manifestation of deception.

Two common ways of coping with the pressure of marriage have been identified. One is to favour marriage. Most men who have sex with men continue this behaviour even after marriage. Some choose to resist marriage.

For those who choose to resist marriage, coming out is the most commonly used coping strategy. The case studies point out differences with regard to coming out in terms of to whom to disclose and when and how. Some subjects decided to come out to parents (15%) while others disclosed their sexual orientation to the respective brides (5%).

Heterosexual masculinity is the cultural pressure exerted on males to display traits that are considered to be masculine and to be heterosexual in their sexual orientation. Failure results in stigmatisation as feminine and socially unacceptable. Those who are not acting out normative masculinity find themselves socially excluded and marginalized, creating a negative impact on their psychological, emotional and social wellbeing.

Seventy five percent (75%) of self identified koti subjects reported confusion with sexual identity and gender identity (i.e. effeminate behaviour). Fifty five percent (55%) of the subjects (self identified Panthi) reported confusion with their sexuality and often same sex attraction. Ten percent (10 %) of the study group expressed a desire to change their sexual orientation. For them their sexual orientation was the root of their psychological and emotional discomfort. This is evident from following statements:

"I want to change my orientation because I think this is the only cause of discomfort to me. Today medical science developed a lot; there must be a treatment to change sexual orientation. I want to be a normal person who is attracted by the opposite sex".

### **Coming Out:**

The study finds that only 10% of MSM have disclosed their sexual orientation. The larger proportion remained secretive about their sexual orientation. Non disclosure of sexual orientation is adopted as a coping mechanism to avoid further social complications.

The study also suggests that the men experience conflict between their sexual behaviours and personal values when they do not disclose their identity to a significant other or others in their lives. Fifty percent (50%) of the group reported feelings of shame, guilt and self hatred just for not disclosing their sexual orientation to their closest ones.

An individual's decision to disclose his sexual orientation to his family is stressful both for the individual and for his loved ones. An analysis of coming out histories suggests that parental reactions to the disclosure caused major stress to the person coming out. Societal homophobia, unfamiliarity of the concept of homosexuality and cultural predispositions encourage parents to apply negative disposition of homosexuality on to their children. Common responses of parents include, "Get married, you will obey", or "It is just passing phase". For most of the subjects, disclosure in the family about sexual orientation was associated with "confusion", "anger" "shame" "or" therapy to change'. Some families do not openly denounce homosexuality but a self-conceived assumption of expected negative reaction from parents discouraged some men (10%) from communicating with them and reinforced their negative assumptions.

In most of the cases, it was found that fathers usually withdraw or reduce their interaction with their sons, while mothers were generally more considerate and nurturing towards their sons. Coming out to unknown persons or those who do not know family members seems to be very easy. Eighty percent (80%) of the group's members have disclosed their sexual orientation to unknown heterosexual persons. Coming out at the workplace is more difficult and it was identified that the disclosure is made only to confidants. Individual differences noted in the coming out histories are determined by the nature of interaction and relationship. Mostly self disclosure of sexual orientation was on a one-to-one basis.

### **Discrimination & labelling:**

Many subjects reported discrimination within society as well as in the family based on their effeminate behaviour and this often translated to a long term and deep seated psychological unrest, creating psychological problems such as low self esteem, depression and suicidal ideations. FGD participants reported that sexual abuse within their family often originated from powerful male members, often uncles and / or older cousins. The family, when it became aware of such abuse, usually reacted with shame, and attempted to cover up the incident, rather than to protect the abused.

This study finds that a large number of the person's peers attribute homosexuality as "unnatural" or as a "passing phase". This encourages an individual to think his same sex attraction and some sex desire are "wrong" or "bad", and he may often correlate or construct his sexuality and his behaviour as sinful. Many subjects revealed that sexual loving towards a person of the same sex is often associated with "shame", "disgust" or "illness". This might inevitably lead to homosexually oriented men developing a negative self image. Some of the subjects of the study



(40%), tried to hide their feminine characteristics as they were often abused with such derogatory terms as "Baylo" (coward), "homo" etc. Some of the subjects group (10%) coped with the stresses associated with labeling by others by accepting it as a challenge for the development of their own identity. This is clearly evident from following remarks:

"...Dogs keep barking why should I be disturbed by them. There is nothing different in me. I am absolutely okay and my behaviour is normal they boys used to bully me by calling me "sister", which I liked to hear and later on I visualize myself as their sister. I tied rakhi to them on the occasion of Raskha Bandhan- Hindu festival where sister ties sacred thread (called rakhi) on the right wrist to brother".

In this case, the subject rejected the possible "shame" associated with being revealed as a sister/ female.

Discrimination and labelling creates the question of "why", and implies "why me?" or "How could this happen to me?" These are existential questions inherent in a reaction to discrimination and labeling by others.

### **Intimate Relationship:**

Men who have sex with men share the common human need for meaningful intimate relationships in which the connection is genuine, open and honest. Childhood sexual abuse may lead to frustration and the child's sense of personal boundaries and affective relationship building is clearly impacted. Such experiences may foster a sense of isolation, creating a perspective of the world that is harsh and dangerous. This creates a spiral of difficulties whereby the child/developing adult may take enormous risks to "belong" or to avoid abandonment, often with profound consequences in terms of their psychological and emotional well being.

Do Wright, 2000, identified several factors which undermine gay men's ability to find meaning: (1) Socialized homophobia; of childhood sexual and physical abuse; (2) The highly sexualized nature of contemporary gay culture; (3) the cultural session with youth and beauty; (4) lack of intimate gay role models and (5) The prevalence of HIV and other serious STDs. These are some of the major forces compromising the search for intimacy. Emotional vulnerability also adds stress to their emotional life. The study reveals that steady, long-lasting relationships for members of the group were rare due to societal homophobia and pressures of marriage relationships. Such break ups are very stressful. No matter the age of the person, an important aspect of gay life involves looking for that perfect mate or "mature" relationship (Cristian and keebe, 1997). Most homosexual men continue to work toward a balance between intimacy and isolation. These men continue the search for the perfect partner in every partner. The following remarks illustrate the dilemma.

"In my life, I strive to find a person who understands me, someone with morals and someone who has some creditability but I have not yet found one. I would say that I probably have had 1000 Sex partners. Maybe more. I do not know over my life time, which isn't a huge amount as MSM culture goes. Now I do not believe in steady relationship and steady partner. They just keep sexual relationship but do not have heart to accept their sexual orientation and homosexual relationship".

Most of the subjects do not believe in the possibility of a steady relationship though they always desire it. This in turn may lead them to have multiple sexual partners. Their dream of having a steady relationship remaining unfulfilled creates a feeling of misfortune. They often feel jealous when they see very happy heterosexual couples or homosexual couples. Multiple sexual partners here may also be a coping strategy to deal with stress.

### **Support Groups:**

The need for association is well accepted within psychology, Baumeister and Leary (1995) reviewed the literature to lend empirical support to what we all know to be true: that people need people. Their "Belongingness hypothesis" characterizes belonging as a basic human need and is supported by their findings that "the existence of or potential for social relationship shapes cognition and emotion, and this suggests that the need to belong is indeed fundamental pressure" (Mamstead, P. 240). This can be evidenced by the existence group of MSM in India.

Analysis of case histories shows that most of the participants became involved with MSM networks at the modal age of 21, while same sex attraction was felt as early as age 9. Participants reported feeling isolated during the long gap between their awareness of same sex attraction and their involvement in a support network. After joining MSM networks, most of the subjects of the study have developed a positive self image of being homosexual men. A MSM network or support group helps them to accept their sexual orientation and help to come out to family and the society.

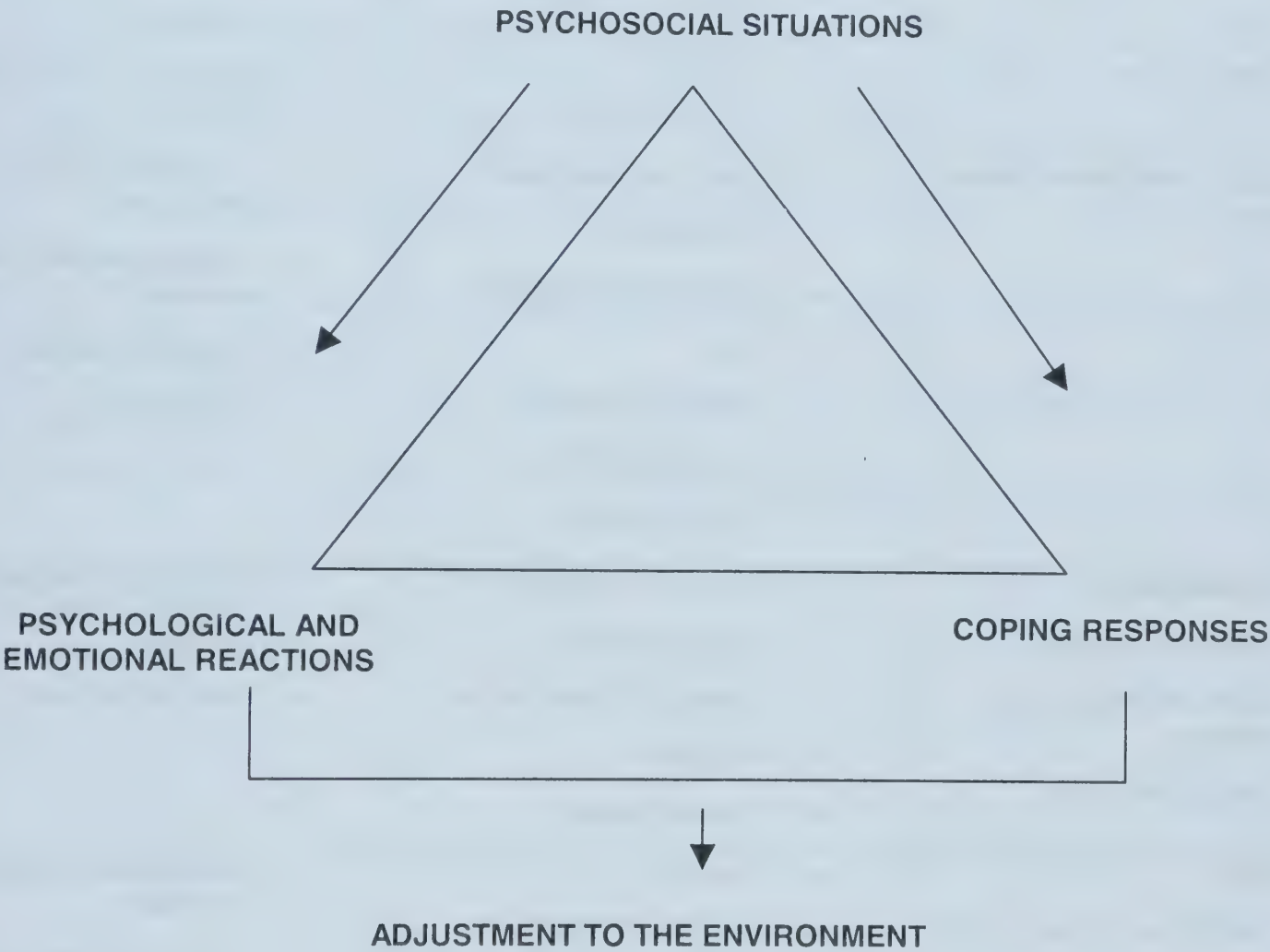
MSM networks helped them to get in touch with other people thereby reducing feelings of being alone and isolated. A commonly observed coping style is social isolation by avoiding social interaction and becoming introverted. MSM networks or support groups encourage one to come out and accept ones sexual orientation.



Members report developing feelings of comfort after joining support groups. Most homosexual men maintain an incongruency between their public and private sexual identity. Hence, for many MSM, non-disclosure of their sexual identity in the social spheres is the best coping strategy for them. Most of them reported that they came to know about support groups from peers.

**Conclusion**

It can be concluded that psychosocial stresses lead to a spiral of psychological, emotional and behavioural reactions. Such situations often lead to the development of dual self image. One is a personal self-image of being homosexual. This core of self accepts and acknowledges one's homosexuality. Another is Social self-image which is based on social construction and social norms. A social image of self consists of the desire for the idealized sexual orientation and status within society to be accepted in the society. Many men accept their homosexuality but often do not disclose their identity publicly because of prevalent stigma and discrimination. They tend to live heterosexually within society as most of the homosexual men in India are married, leading a homosexual life secretly. This duality may lead to intrapsychic stress which manifests itself in symptoms of anxiety and depression. Psychosocial dynamics can be explained as below.



**Figure: 1 Psychosocial Experience triad**

Psychosocial situations often lead to psychological and emotional reactions which determine the coping responses of the subject. For example, relationship break ups produce depressed feelings and hence an individual tries to cope with the situation by self-destructive behaviours, take substances like alcohol, tobacco or drugs, or indulge in sexual relationships with multiple partners.

Detailed accounts of psychosocial situations and identified possible psychological, emotional and coping responses can be observed from the following table.



PSYCHOSOCIAL SITUATIONS	PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL REACTIONS	BEHAVIORAL COPING RESPONSES
<b>Childhood Experiences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of homosexuality</li> <li>• First Sexual experience</li> <li>• Sexual abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusion with gender and sexual identity</li> <li>• Shame, guilt</li> <li>• secrecy of one's sexuality</li> <li>• Self blame</li> <li>• Low self esteem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select Support</li> <li>• Seek more information</li> <li>• Network with support group</li> <li>• Suicidal attempt</li> </ul>
<b>Societal homophobia</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social environment</li> <li>• Cultural impositions</li> <li>• Pressure of Marriage</li> <li>• Duality</li> <li>• Black mailing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social phobia</li> <li>• Internalization of homophobia Anxiety</li> <li>• Identity confusion</li> <li>• Felling of worthless</li> <li>• Self hatred</li> <li>• Low self esteem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanctioning social interaction</li> <li>• Coming out</li> <li>• Try to change sexual orientation</li> <li>• Marriage</li> <li>• Secrecy of one's sexual identity.</li> </ul>
<b>Discrimination and abuse labels or Remarks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling of misfortune</li> <li>• Self hatred</li> <li>• Hatred forward society</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Depressed feelings</li> <li>• Suicidal ideation</li> <li>• Low self esteem.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tolerate discrimination and abuse.</li> <li>• Accept/ neglect labels or remarks</li> <li>• social withdrawal</li> <li>• self labelling</li> </ul>
<b>Intimate Relationship</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partners marriage</li> <li>• Emotional rejection by partners</li> <li>• Dealing with wife</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depressed feelings</li> <li>• Suicidal ideation</li> <li>• Feelings of being left out</li> <li>• Self blame</li> <li>• Low self esteem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self destructive behaviour</li> <li>• Addiction</li> <li>• Multiple partners</li> </ul>
<b>Coming Out</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coming out to one's self</li> <li>• Coming out to closed friends</li> <li>• Coming out to closed family members</li> <li>• Coming out at workplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Fear of unknown</li> <li>• Confusion with gender and sexual identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coming out of the family members</li> <li>• Remained unmarried</li> <li>• Accept marriage proposal and lead dual life.</li> </ul>

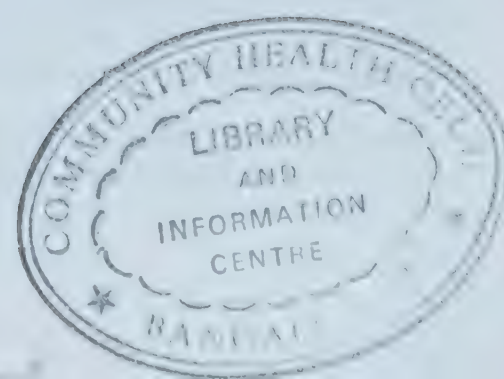
**Table: 1 Psychological / emotional reactions and coping responses of MSM**

The above table provides a birds-eye view of a psychosocial situation that creates adverse psychological, emotional and behavioural reactions. It can be observed that there are multiple psychosocial stressors creating negative psychological affects and this influences adjustment to the social environment. The correlation between psychological, emotional reactions and behavioural coping responses need to be studied even more intensely.



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# A successful strength-based approach in PNG Education: From strength to strength – Building on strengths to build strong school-community partnerships

Silina Tagagau and John Pettit

*BEDP works with over 3000 communities in PNG to promote school-community partnerships. The project uses a strength-based approach unique to PNG in training and funding gender-equitable teams of two (an education officer and a local women leader) to conduct capacity building visits. Their training focuses on the 5D model of capacity building and includes HIV/AIDS and gender awareness.*

*The first visit is to engage the communities in supporting their schools, to gather data re infrastructure and governance and to help develop a School Action Plan for infrastructure maintenance. Schools subsequently receive a small annual maintenance grant. Subsequent visits update data and engage communities in a qualitative evaluation process using an adaptation of Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology. Schools are also assisted to develop an infrastructure development plan.*

*The project has achieved significant results in service delivery, particularly to remote school communities, and in engaging community members. It is enhancing the capacity of provincial governments to manage a program of school visits and infrastructure maintenance. Key learnings relate to the focus on a strength-based approach, an active commitment to gender equity, a reliance on evidence-based decision making and an uncompromising approach to accountability and transparency.*

## Introduction

This paper provides:

- A brief overview of the Papua New Guinea (PNG) context, with particular focus on factors impacting on education.
- An outline of the Basic Education Development Project (BEDP).
- A description of the approach taken in promoting community participation and the methods used to monitor it.
- An analysis of baseline data survey responses related to community participation and Board of Management (BoM) operations received to date.
- A review of the evidence from other sources, principally the Board of Management Facilitation (BoMF) Impact Stories from the first round of visits.
- A sample of Most Important Change (MIC) Stories
- Cross province observations and general findings.

## Papua New Guinea Context

The Independent State of Papua New Guinea was created in 1975. It occupies the eastern half of the island of New Guinea and the island archipelagos to the north and east. It lies directly to the north of Australia. Its western boundary is with the Indonesian province of West Papua and its eastern border is with Solomon Islands.

Although blessed with rich and abundant resources, the country's social and economic indicators have remained static or shown a decline over recent decades.

The current population is estimated at 5.6 million, with a generalised HIV/AIDS epidemic now evident. 85% of the population live subsistence lives in rural and remote communities, with significantly reduced access to markets, infrastructure and government services. Hansen, Allen, Bourke and McCarthy 2001 p. 296 report that over half the rural population earn very low to low incomes (<K40 p.a., ie around \$US12 p.a.).

Education is one of the few indicators which have shown growth, with a doubling of children in school over the past 10 – 15 years, primarily due to the introduction of elementary education. Progression and retention rates are problematic, with many students being 'pushed out' at grade 8 or grade 10. There are few opportunities for further education or formal employment for grade 10 and 12 school leavers.

Notwithstanding this significant growth, around half the population remain illiterate. Retention and attendance rates show a significant bias against the education of girls.



Retention rates are gradually increasing but are still below half for both males and females throughout PNG.

1992 Approx average 15%

2001 Average 35.5 %

2004 Average 41% (Department of Education, 2006).

### **Basic Education Development Project**

The Basic Education Development Project (BEDP) commenced in May 2004 and will continue to May 2008. BEDP focuses on capacity building through the development and maintenance of primary school facilities, and the development of partnerships between government and the community.

The **project goal** is: to contribute to the effective implementation of quality and equitable primary schooling in PNG.

The **purpose** of the project is: 'to establish an ongoing program of primary and community school facility development and maintenance which is being independently managed by school communities with assistance from relevant Local, Provincial and National Government departments' (Australian Agency for International Development 2003, p. 53).

The project is being implemented progressively over a four year period in all provinces. In 2004, ten provinces were involved. In 2005, five more provinces joined the project and another four provinces in 2006.

BEDP supports the National Department of Education (DoE) to collect accurate data on existing school infrastructure and to establish appropriate infrastructure standards and funding levels for the nation's schools. The DoE's policy of self reliance is being implemented by encouraging school communities to take responsibility for their schools.

### **Community Participation Strategy and Tools**

Our community participation strategy was developed with several principles in mind:

- The primary focus of the initial BEDP contact with each school community is on developing (or reinforcing) a strong, practical and relevant relationship between the community and the school.
- The Board of Management (BoM) is a service to the community, as well as the DoE, in that it represents the interests of and is accountable to the community. Effective BoMs ensure that the community's participation is well managed and the community's access to suitable education is increased.
- A strength-based or assets-based approach is used to encourage communities to locate the enthusiasm for improvement by recalling their own previous experiences of successful community participation and by identify existing competencies and capacities to bring about communally desired improvements. The community's capacities include skills, material resources, equipment, social relationships and potential sources of funds.
- Gender disaggregated activities and promotion of women's equal participation in all community analysis, planning, decision making and implementation.
- Action planning with the community that is simple, promoting full ownership and capable of immediate implementation while also being subject to national standards and complemented by government and donor subsidy.
- Data collection for a baseline and ongoing monitoring that reflects local capabilities, is capable of capturing primary information, is participative and provides the community and school with relevant information about progress.
- Our approach is grounded in key principles, particularly ownership, participation, gender and equity, sustainability, self-reliance, affordability and flexibility (SAGRIC International 2004 p12).

### **The Strength-Based Approach**

Following an initial induction workshop and subsequent four-day training for District Women Facilitators (DWF) and another week for all members of BoMF teams, teams were funded to visit schools in the participating provinces. Some schools were either suspended or closed due to tribal fighting, weather conditions or other factors.

The first visit of the BoMF team members is designed to also build the capacity of the BoM to work more closely with the community. The strategy encourages the whole community to plan for ways in which they can



contribute to immediate needs for improvement and for longer term involvement. During this visit, the BoMF team members model an approach that encourages members of the BoM to act as facilitators of community involvement in developing an action plan and then to take responsibility for managing community participation in implementing the plan of action in the future.

This approach abandons the more traditional 'problem tree analysis' of core problems and focuses instead on previous examples of successful cooperation between the community and the school. The steps in this approach are referred to as the '5Ds'. The key components of this approach are:

1. Story telling is used as a means to collecting information from the community.
2. Discussion takes place in focus groups - women, men, youth, teachers.
3. The overall focus is on experiences when the community and the school functioned well – or functioned in a manner considered successful by the participants.
4. The starting point is designed to build the community's self esteem and locate the energy for improvement.
5. The community itself proposes a desirable future articulated in an agreed statement of vision.
6. The community documents its own available assets to be mobilised for group action.
7. Agreement is reached by voting or consensus on an action plan for community involvement in immediate and short term improvements around the school.
8. Follow up information is collected through story telling of changes considered by the community to be most significant, using a locally developed version of Most Significant Change Story (MSC) methodology (Dart and Davies 2004), referred to as Most Important Change (MIC) stories.

### **Action Plan**

The immediate and tangible outcome of this first visit is the School Action Plan. This plan is based on an agreement between school staff, BoM and the broader community about the four most important maintenance activities that should be done in the near future and using mostly the resources of the local community. The BoM and Headteacher will consider how the Maintenance Grants to be provided through BEDP will be used to supplement the community's plan. This action plan also forms the basis of a more comprehensive Three Year Infrastructure Development Plan (SIDP).

### **Baseline Data Survey**

A baseline survey of participating schools was developed and trialled during the inception phase (Department of Education 2004). It incorporates both infrastructure and community participation dimensions.

Surveys are distributed by Board of Management Facilitation (BoMF) Teams during their visits to schools.

BoMF teams were expected (and trained) to help school Headteachers and BoM members to complete the forms.

The Baseline Data Survey information presented in this paper is based on responses to questions that identify the existing situation in relation to the BoM, the P&C and community participation or contributions by the community to the school.

### **Story Telling**

Story telling is a qualitative method of collecting information. It is participative in that the description of the impact of the project is provided directly by project participants.

BEDP utilises two story telling methodologies:

- Impact Stories (first visit).
- Most Important Change Stories (MIC) (second visit).

Impact Stories are recounts by project implementers of their experiences and observations. As such they can be both descriptive and analytical. They have been found particularly useful in BoMF Review Workshops to promote the concept of the 'critically reflective practitioner' and also to capture in more permanent form the thoughts, observations and actions of the BoMF team members.

The Most Important Change Story approach enables community members to tell stories at the beginning of the process and progressively through the life of the project. These stories are collected, selected and reflected



back to the wider community. Because only stories that have the most meaning for project stakeholders are eventually chosen, this method provides clear and useful feedback to the beneficiaries at the local level.

### Program Implementer Observation

BoMF team members are required to take short notes relating to their time in the community. These are recorded in First Visit Reports and used for monitoring. Project staff also participate in selected school visits as a means of monitoring progress.

Following all first visits, a BoMF Review workshop is held. This allows for reflection, an analysis of progress and information about community participation in the schools visited.

The second, and longer, school visit (typically 2 nights) seeks to strengthen the functions of the BoM and to assist schools develop three year School Infrastructure Development Plans, complete a second school survey and acquit the first maintenance grant. At the time of writing this report, few second school visit reports and annual surveys had been received at the BEDP office.

### Process and Inputs

This approach to community participation in partnership with the school was developed in two stakeholder workshops. The first was to introduce and agree upon the strength-based model for community development and community action planning. The second was to introduce and agree upon the use of the Most Significant Change methodology as the principal method of participative community monitoring and evaluation.

Further training about the use of the MSC story telling method took place during the BoMF Review workshop prior to the second visit by BoMF teams. The term 'Most Important Change' conveyed greater meaning to community members, and hence was adopted in BEDP.

Materials produced to improve community participation have included:

- Facilitator and Participant Manuals and school visit booklets
- Laminated photographs, cartoons, drawings and aide memoires
- Laminated 1<sup>st</sup> School Visit Steps and Procedures
- Handbooks and Flip charts for community meetings.

Many materials have been translated into Tok Pisin (the local vernacular) as English literacy rates are often low, particularly in rural communities.

### Information from the Database

At the time of preparing this paper, 1567 surveys from schools that had been visited by the BoMF teams had been entered into the database. This represents approximately 66% of the maximum possible total of 2387 registered schools.

Three indices have been constructed to report on the available data about community participation. Each index comprises three sub-indicators. They are:

Index	Sub-indicators
BoM Functionality	No of Meetings in last year PEB approval Women representatives on BoM
P&C Activities	Tidying the school School maintenance Fund-raising
Community Support	Provision of labour Provision of materials Fund-raising

One measure was the number of times the BoM met in the previous twelve months. Four meetings per year was taken as the minimum level for an effectively functioning BoM. Of the 1567 schools that responded to this question, 809 (52%) indicated that their BoM had met at least four times in that period.

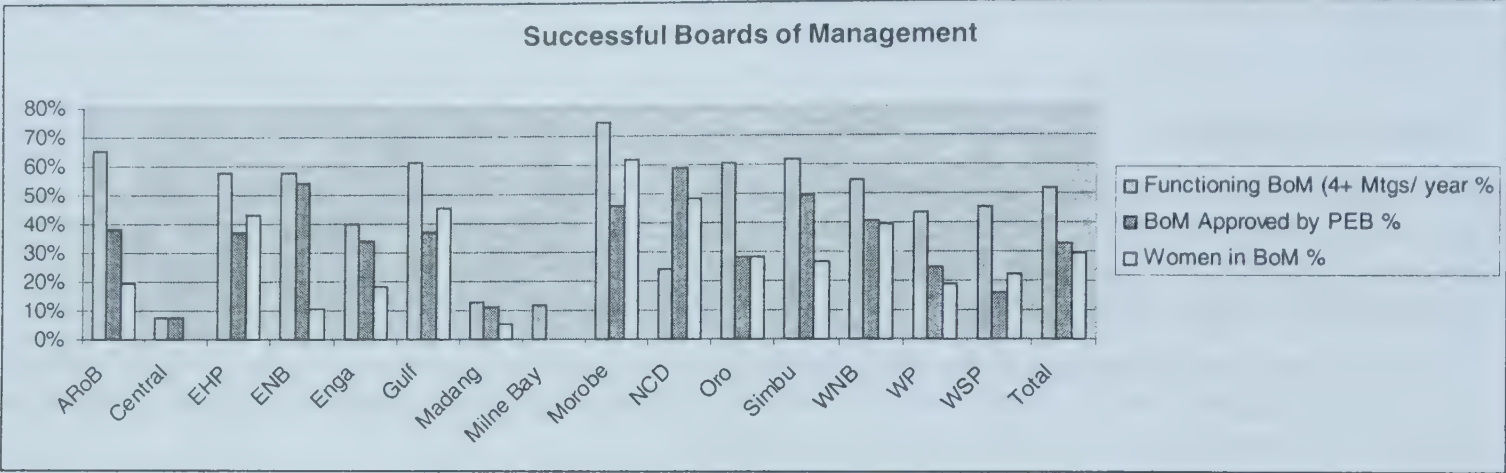


Some schools indicated that their BoM had met less frequently. Approximately 6% of schools reported that their BoM did not meet in the previous 12 months, while 10% did not respond to this question.

The second measure of functionality relates to the existence of a legal BoM, ie one that had been approved by the Provincial Education Board (PEB). Only legal BoMs are authorised to receive and spend public monies. 33% of responding schools indicated that their BoM was legally constituted.

The third measure of functionality is the extent to which women are represented on the BoM. Overall, only 29% of schools reported having any women on the BoM. A small number of schools reported women in executive positions on their BoM. Six reported a female chairperson; 35 a female deputy chairperson; 84 reported a female treasurer and 143 reported a female BoM secretary. Only 28 schools reported having two or more females in BoM executive positions. Typically, female representation (where it exists) is on subcommittees.

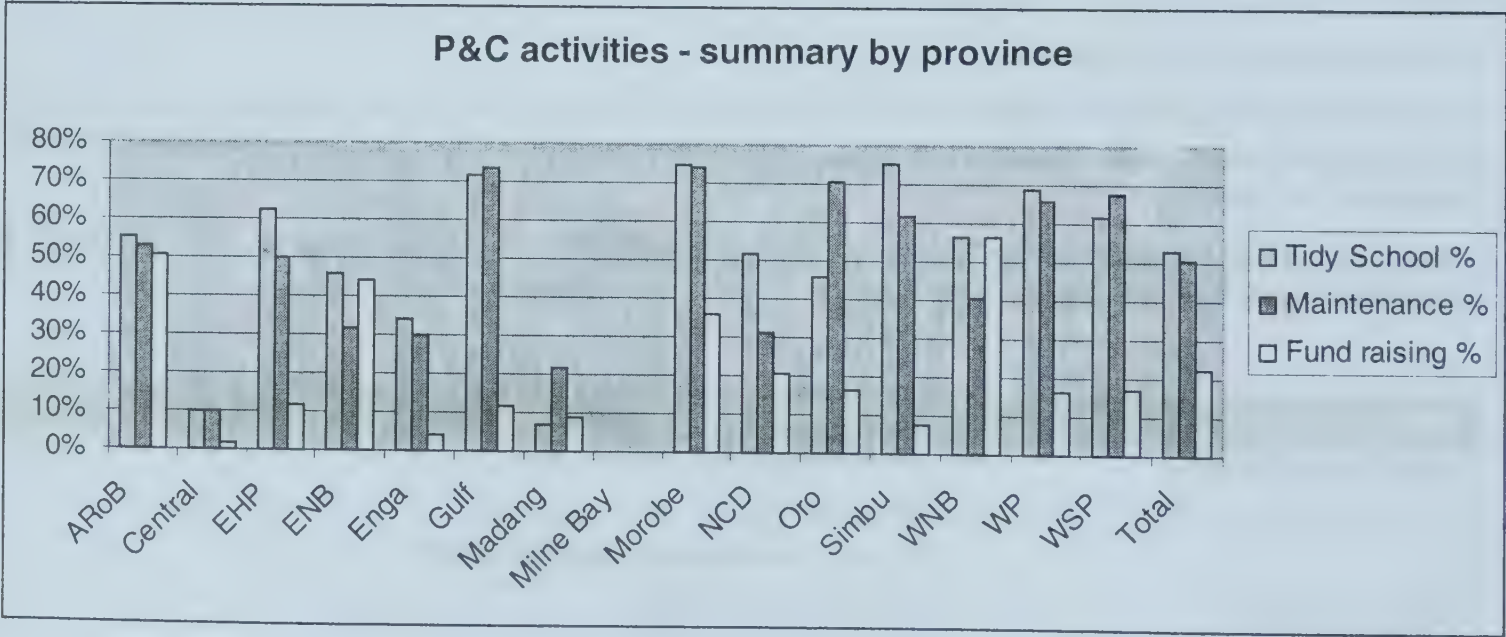
The following chart illustrates the provincial variation on each sub-indicator, as a percentage of total responses.



The Baseline survey asked schools to identify the ways in which their P&C contributed to the school.

Just over half the responding schools (53%) indicated that their P&C played an active part in keeping the school grounds tidy. Slightly over half the schools (51%) reported that the P&C was active in school maintenance. Only one in five schools (22%) reported that their P&C played an active role in raising funds for the school.

The following chart illustrates the provincial variation on each sub-indicator, as a percentage of total responses.

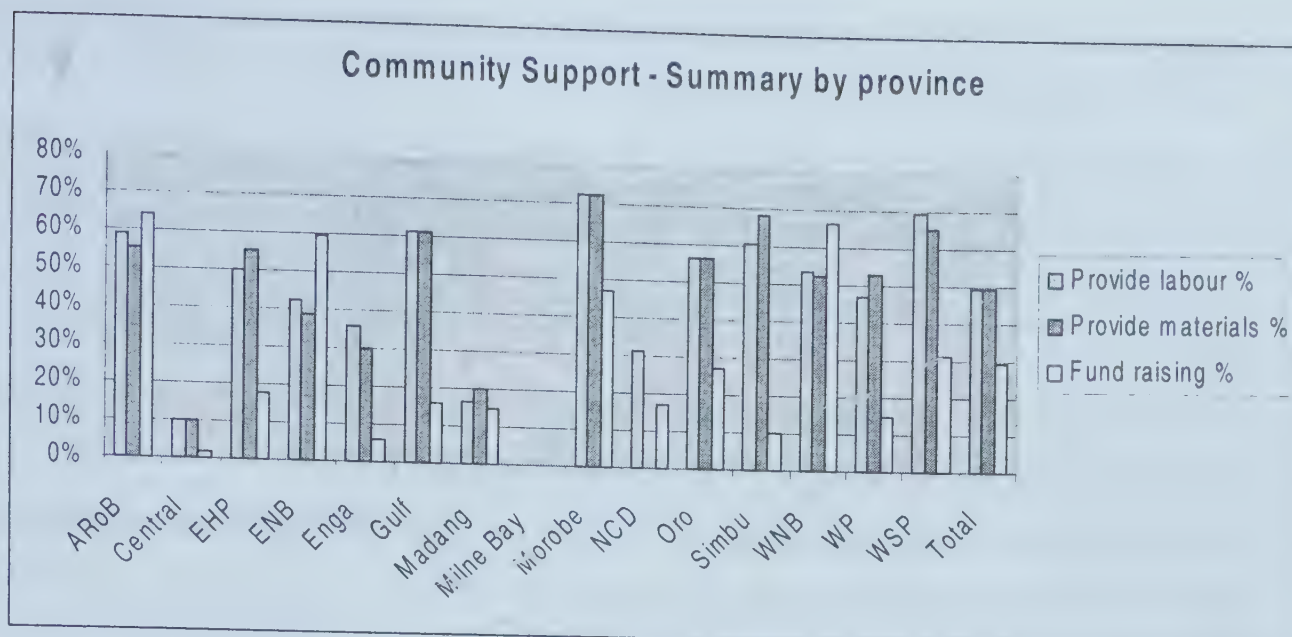


The Baseline survey asked schools to identify the ways in which the broader community contributed to the school.

Overall, 50% of schools reported that the broader community supported the school by providing labour for maintenance of existing, and for construction or new, infrastructure. A similar number of schools (50%) reported that maintenance and infrastructure materials were provided by the broader community. Less than one school in three (29%) reported that the broader community actively raised funds for the school.

The following chart illustrates the provincial variation on each sub-indicator, as a percentage of total responses.





### Information from BoMF Review Workshop and School Visit Reports

The action plans drawn up by the community have already led to considerable improvements in school infrastructure and in governance by BoMs, as well as a greater focus on equity and access for women and girls.

Examples of the improvements that have occurred after the first visits include:

#### Infrastructure changes:

- Repair of furniture
- Improvements in class rooms
- Building new classrooms with bush materials
- Building new, and improving existing, teachers' houses
- Toilets repaired or built
- School fencing improved or built
- Lawns cut and gardens planted.

Women continue to take a lead in organising improvements around the school that immediately affect female students, such as separate toilets.

Improvements carried out by community continue to progress. At Sakarina Primary school in Oro province, 2 new double classrooms were built with local timbers and local contractors. Solar power for four teacher's houses was provided. An elementary bush material building was built by several villages from the area. One village was responsible for the walls, one for rafters for the roof, and one for furniture. This school has now been selected to receive an infrastructure grant.

In Madang, Seven Community School was set up in the late 1990s by communities because their children had to walk hours to the (then) nearest school. Women sold goods at the market to earn money for a teacher's salary. The school was finally registered two years ago and the teacher is now on government salary.

#### Governance:

- Women invited to participate on the BoM and an increasing number of women elected as chairpersons or executives of school boards and committees,
- Women asked to provide inservice training on gender equity for teachers,
- Women previously excluded from community meetings invited to participate (or taking the courage to participate), because of the central role of the DWF as a BoMF member,
- BoM motivated to ask for more teachers,
- Community and BoM meeting to consider how they can arrange to re-open a school,



- BoM providing a financial report to the community for the first time ever,
- Level of parents' fee compliance increased.

Some of the BoMF team members have reported the surprising finding that the involvement of youth in the community action planning process has led to a substantial increase by young people in shaping the future of the school and how they can make the sort of improvements which they had wanted while at school.

#### Indirect benefits:

- DWF invited to assist a women's group to plan their annual activity using the 5D process.
- DWF using the project initiative to settle a major tribal fight in Enga.
- DWF church leaders mobilising women in their church circuit using the Strength Based Approach.
- Several DWFs now intending to go into politics after gaining confidence through this project.
- DWFs asked to implement literacy programs across a whole District.

Perhaps the most significant initial benefit arising from the first school visits has been a change in communities' attitude toward their school. This is because it is becoming obvious that the ideas, knowledge and practices of the BEDP community participation approach have been internalised both by the community and the BoMF teams. School BoMs appreciate understanding their roles and responsibilities which gives them power that was usually absent in the past to make informed decisions. Communities are more positive towards supporting their schools. BoMF members are taking it on as individual personal development. One of the BoMF team member's personal assessments after the 2<sup>nd</sup> visit recorded:

*The world outside awaited for me. Meanwhile BEDP happily carried out its training (project). The time came and BEDP introduced me into the world. As years went, by BEDP gently and faithfully nurtured me and taught me the many basics of life. BEDP groomed and moulded my character to what I am today. Growing up as a DWF in last couple of years, I saw the world through a positive way. I observe and learn about society's unfairness about women's role in the society and I learned to demonstrate (as a women) courage and determination. BEDP provided me the road to success and brought the best out of me. BEDP was my guide and my shining star. A personal role model. (Lily Graham, Gumini, Simbu province).*

Behavioural and attitude change is the ultimate aim when dealing with communities in PNG. From such comments, we are confident that BEDP can enhance community ownership and self mobilisation in school management in PNG. The Strength Based Approach enhances these changes to happen.

Almost all BoMF members reported high level of participation during their visits. Schools that were visited for the first time after 10-15 years shared their disappointment with the lack of previous government presence, eg:

*In Oriropetan community school, attendance was really good and the community responded well through their eagerness and expressed support for this project. Good discussions held and community requested for consistency in awareness because the school was last visited in 1990. (Peter Oa and Margaret Paika- Kairiku, Central.)*

The involvement of women in this project is effectively having an impact on women making decisions for the benefit of their children's basic needs in education. Women's participation in school activities was limited to doing general cleaning up, fundraising etc. They were never given consideration to make informed decisions due to cultural and traditional values and practices. Through the DWFs' involvement, people are seeing gender from a different perspective, eg:

*In Vunuamai community school women were prepared to put things into action after developing a school action plan and deciding their priority activity. Men lack the support and we hope to see males' attitude change in our next visit. (Christine Ikupu and Rose Harima, Central)*

These short comments illustrate the interest generated and the desire to bring about changes in their schools for the benefit of present and future generations.

#### Information from Stories of BoMF

The impact stories told and written by BoMF team members during the BoMF reviews illustrate substantial evidence of community support and participation with the BoMF team during their first school visit. Examples of the many stories received to date are:

**Story 1.** In Milne Bay Province, women in their grass skirts attending the meeting were too shy to speak out because their customs could not allow this. After the BoMF took them through the community development process and the importance of women's participation, they realised that women are not there to only cook for



them during the meetings but to also have a part in the overall decision making and management of the school. They also realised that the school belongs to them and not to the government because their children go to this school.

**Story 2.** In Central province, an education officer reported that the communities decided to mobilise themselves to assist because for the first time, a women representative (DWF) from their community energised them to do so. The community willingly support the project because women are now taking the leading role to organise and facilitate the school activities in their local communities.

**Story 3.** Ron Staples, an independent assessor, visited Iobunakaupa and Kuria primary schools in Central Province. He reported that, 'It is early days as entry to schools under the BED project is only one year old. However, entry for community mobilisation, which is most difficult, appears to have been very successful' (Staples 2006 p.2)

BEDP continues to show positive outcomes. In Central province it was reported as creating a major revolution in community mobilisation to be independent and self-reliant in helping themselves to develop their community and especially their schools. Communities finally realised that all these years they have been waiting for basic services to come to them but today that is not the case anymore. Ownership and self-reliance in managing their schools is the way forward. This has been a very important message for those schools that have not been visited for 10- 25 years.

The BEDP Strengths Based approach is becoming a recognised and user friendly approach that fits in well to community development in PNG. BEDP's presentation to a Community Development Expo in Lae, (Tagagau 2006) generated interest and discussions from various community development organisations, especially Non Government Organisations (NGO) and community development agencies recognising that building on strengths is preferable to counteracting problems.

This BEDP approach is having an impact, not only in BoMs and the management of schools, but in many kinds of community developmental activities that communities wish to engage in.

### **Information from School Action Plans**

The type of maintenance being undertaken includes furniture (such as desks and library shelves), toilets, classrooms, teachers' houses, water supply or tanks, school fences, administration buildings and teachers' offices. Others include little things like chalk and black boards needing replacing, while others started with beautifying the school by planning for a general cleanup and setting up school flower gardens. Looking at bigger infrastructure, plans have been developed for equipment such as lawn mowers, solar panels and transport, generator sets, plus new infrastructure that includes new double classrooms, new teachers' houses etc.

Classrooms are the highest priority (26%), followed by teachers' houses (14%) and toilets & shower and water supply, both with 11%.

The work plans also shows that all the actions are planned to be carried out by the BoM, community members (men, women, and youth) and or P&C, and village contractors themselves.

Local contributions from almost all school communities include local labour, local materials such as timber, sand, rafters etc. and local expertise such as carpentry and plumbing.

This clearly illustrates that the communities are being energised and motivated to participate in the implementation of their own plans. Thus the self-reliance concept is taking effect in the commitments put towards their participation in school management and responsibilities of their school infrastructure.

### **Program Implementer Observation**

#### **DWF Capacity Building**

A lot of positive and very encouraging feedback came from the review workshops that indicated increasing participation during and after the first school visit.

The following general observations recorded during review workshops are indicative of ongoing positive outcomes. These include:

- Individual women's confidence levels have been raised or boosted, enabling them to speak freely and participate more willingly amongst men.
- Women are strengthened to go into school communities and face whatever hardship that may come with the job.



- It has given the existing women's representatives a helping hand and is proof to other women who were not that exposed to see for themselves what gender equity was all about, to stand up for their rights and work hard.
- Women as part of BoMF have provided a totally new trend of work that most men may not have experienced all their work lives. Men are therefore beginning to accept the change that has come about and are willingly looking forward to working with their female counterparts.
- It is evident that this new partnership between men and women will contribute towards a certain degree of change in the lives of the men or inspectors involved. They in turn become sensitised and will no doubt apply the principles of gender equity in their work in all areas which will see a tide of gender movement taking place country wide in schools and homes.
- Male gender champions are currently increasing within the BoMF circles, in the offices and filtering down to the community levels.

### **BoMF Capacity Building**

The sequence of learning modules clearly brings out the importance of facilitation, the central role of the community, the need to listen to the whole range of community voices and the application of the 5 Ds strength-based approach.

The information provided through the BoMF workshops is tailored to the specific requirements of the school visits, thus reducing information overload and providing the opportunity for repeated practice in application.

The sessions are increasingly delivered by Education and Community Development Department personnel with support from Project Advisers.

Observations about the attitude and willingness of the community to work with schools as a result of the school visits include:

- The communities felt more involved in the school's planning and development and changed their attitude towards the school.
- Communities felt for the first time that they can co-exist with the school and can benefit from the school in return, eg they can use the school facilities for meetings or other community activities.
- The presence of the BoMF team was taken to mean that the government was, at long last, interested in the school and the community. This presence motivated the community.

### **Community and BoM Capacity Building:**

Reports and stories indicate that the community's ability to work cooperatively with their BoM and with the school has been improved. The process of working within focus groups and using BoMF team members' facilitation skills encourages community participation in discussion and decision making.

These include:

- Recognition that they have to do something tangible for their children's education.
- Willing participation in action planning, including prioritisation of work to be done and self-reliant and immediate implementation.
- Community mobilisation of natural resources, offer of free use of equipment, fund raising.
- Requiring greater accountability from the BoM.
- Acceptance of role of women on the BoM and evidence of appreciation of women's participation.

### **Conclusion**

BEDP trains and funds teams of an education officer and a volunteer woman leader living in each local area to visit all the schools in that part of the province. After training they travel to each community and encourage school communities to recognise and celebrate what they have already achieved, and to realise what they can achieve for themselves using their own skills and resources. The teams have encouraged women, men and youths to participate in the meetings and to take ownership of the school. This strength-based approach has resulted in enthusiastic involvement of people and immediate action to improve school infrastructure. The teams also offer advice on how Boards of Management should operate and the need for Gender Equity. Through working with provincial education departments, BEDP is helping to build the capacity of education officers to manage and monitor school infrastructure.



This paper summarises key quantitative and qualitative data about the extent to which communities are actively participating in, and contributing to, the life of their school.

The quantitative data collected via the School Baseline Surveys reports the position essentially before or at the commencement of BEDP. The qualitative data both reinforces and interprets this, and highlights some of the immediate changes that have occurred as a result of project implementers' initial engagement with local community members and school staff.

Small maintenance grants combined with the communities' resources have brought about great changes – from provision of adequate water and sanitation to building of new classrooms. Anecdotal evidence from the teams indicates that there have been wide ranging changes in attitudes with more women elected to the BoMs and youths taking more responsibility for care of the schools. The data also provides strong initial validation of the approach taken by the project in promoting community participation and the methods used to monitor it.

It is evident that much success and outstanding positive progress can be achieved in communities through the involvement and participation of all community groups (focus groups). When everyone is involved and participates together in discussions and decision making, they feel they own the initiative and have the pride that they are able to do it.

The activity's extensive benefits include increased information sharing and understanding of HIV/AIDS amongst school communities, increased confidence of women to take a role in school boards and increased accountability of School Boards of Management in funds management. The activity has increased transparency in school operations and is clearly very popular amongst school communities.

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# A Domestic Violence Coordinated Project - Going Beyond Victim Support

Prasanna Poornachandra

*Domestic violence is a silent crisis that happens daily and with impunity behind closed doors and within close relationships in many Indian homes. Community gender norms tacitly sanction domestic violence. The strongly held belief that marriage as a social institution should be preserved at all costs and that family honour is important forces women to remain silent on the issue and live with abuse. Unfortunately this is a shared philosophy with the criminal justice system, further victimizing the woman. 'Survivalistic corruption' (Prasanna, 1995) adds fuel to the fire.*

*This paper describes and analyses a coordinated (women police unit and a social agency) project, Udhayam- A PCVC Community Support Unit, based in Chennai, India. It highlights the success of an integrated response model that would enhance victim safety, reduce secondary victimization and incidence of domestic violence. The program run on an experimental basis for one year has come out to be an ideal community-based integrated response model with the police and the social and health services together to provide interventions. It paves the way for a Domestic Violence Integrated Response Program that will reduce secondary victimization and enhance victim support through inter-agency cooperation and collaboration.*

In this age of bombs and terrorist threats, it will not be surprising to hear a woman say she fears to travel in a train or a plane, or holds her heart till her child returns home safely from school or work. But the fact is that for many, 'home' is where they face a regime of terror and violence at the hands of somebody close to them – somebody they should be able to trust. They fear going home, a place they should be safest. The women who suffer are unable to make their own decisions, voice their own opinions or protect themselves and their children for fear of further repercussions.

Several complex and interconnected institutionalized social and cultural factors have kept women particularly vulnerable to the violence directed to them, all of them manifestations of historically unequal power relations between men and women. Factors contributing to these unequal power relations include- socio-economic factors, the family institution where power relations are enforced, fear of and control over female sexuality, belief in the inherent superiority of males, and legalisation and cultural sanctions that have traditionally denied women and children an independent legal and social status (UNICEF, 2000).

While in India international attention has focused on dowry deaths, perhaps the most dramatic manifestation of violence against women, it is only part of the problem. Not all violence within the household can be reduced to dowry demand; domestic violence is far more systematic and pervasive than previously acknowledged. The few studies available indicate that physical abuse of Indian women is quite high, ranging from 22% to 60% of women surveyed (Rao, 1996 and Mahajan, 1990). A multi-site study of 9,938 households found that 40 per cent of the women reported experiencing at least one form of physical abuse and, of these, 65 per cent reported severe physical abuse, including being kicked, hit or beaten (INCLEN, 2000). However, there has been very less research on domestic violence as it is highly sensitive and there is a strong cultural resistance in most societies to publicly acknowledge the problem (ICRW, 1998).

## Cultural Context:

Domestic violence in India arises from patriarchal notions of ownership over women- sexuality, labour, reproductive rights, mobility, and level of autonomy. Deep-rooted ideas about male superiority enable men to freely exercise unlimited power over women's lives and 'effectively legitimizes' it too. Violence is thus a tool that men use constantly to control women as a result of highly initialized patriarchal conditioning which accords men the right to beat their wives and thus ostensibly perform the duty of chastising them. The unequal and hierarchical gender relations manifest itself clearly in the familial setup and are accentuated by clear demarcation of sex roles and sexual division of labor.

Violence within the home constitutes, more often than not, a 'private' affair because of the high value attached to family as an indisputably sacrosanct social institution. In fact, this belief disables rightful cognizance of the fact that more often than not, the family, in reality, is the site of and the root of unequal gender relations and oppression of women. This in fact, puts violence (which is systematically meted out to women within the family) above public scrutiny, thereby creating a public/private dichotomy with respect to violence against women.

Not surprisingly, thus, marital violence, especially woman battering goes largely unnoticed or more importantly, hushed. It has also been quite apparent for a long time now that violence against women within the family does not constitute an occasional, rare incident, but is a regular systemic and structural manifestation of social control. One of



the main causes for the non-recognition of wife battering as a serious social crime has been the fact that the phenomenon has been shrouded in myths and stereotypes which need to be debunked to enable an understanding of family violence. These range from viewing battered women as mentally disturbed or sick individuals, batterers as products of an abusive environment; and violence as a result of abuse of drug and alcohol. (Subadra)

### **Response to Domestic Violence in India:**

The government of India has always been open to working towards ending violence against women and support women's movement to reform the law and evolve strategies to provide support and treatment services. Throughout the 1980's, the Indian society witnessed numerous struggles by women's' organisation, on issues of dowry deaths, custodial rape, abductions of women, *sati*, female infanticide, sexual harassment of young girls and women in public places, trafficking and prostitution. It is important to note that there is a legal reform by the government in response to each of these issues of violence against women during the past decade (Agnes, 1996).

Both government and non-government organisations have come up with various preventive and supportive strategies that include shelter homes, counselling services, and legal aid centres. Further several Indian states have established special women police cells or all women police stations (AWPS) to aid women in reporting violence. The introduction of these AWPS, especially in Tamilnadu, has been an important response to family violence. Non-governmental organizations are a final critical entry point for women who are unable to access the police or legal services. NGO services include crisis counselling, legal assistance, temporary shelter, economic opportunities or a combination of services.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, provides for more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family. Under the new Act, any woman subjected to mental or physical injuries, physical abuse, criminal intimidation or force, sexual abuse (any conduct of a sexual nature that abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the dignity of woman), will be covered under domestic violence.

As per the Act, a police officer, protection officer, service provider or magistrate who receives a message of domestic violence shall inform the aggrieved person of her right to make an application for obtaining relief by way of a protection order. The Act further provides the rights for free legal services under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, and right to file a complaint under Section 498-A (Cruelty by Husband and In laws) of the Indian Penal Code, wherever relevant. The aggrieved person may be provided shelter in the home and also medical facilities, if needed.

### **Domestic Violence and the Criminal Justice System:**

Although the government, both central and state, recognise the importance of protecting women from abuse and punishing the perpetrators of the crimes, the dilemma of whether it should be treated as a traditional crime or whether there should be emphasis on counselling and mediation prevails. Most magistrates, judges and the police adhere to traditional values that support the family as an institution and the dominance of the male party within it (UNICEF, 2000).

The criminal justice approach of arrest, prosecution and conviction with punishment is a clear condemnation of the society for the conduct of the abuser and acknowledges his personal responsibility for the activity. Though there is no research comparing the success of mediation to prosecution of domestic violence cases in India, a Minneapolis Police department 's research has shown that 19 per cent of those involved in mediation and 24 per cent of those ordered to leave their matrimonial homes repeated the assault, but only 10 per cent of those who were arrested indulged in further violence (UN, ECOSOC, 1996). It is critical that those involved in policy making in this area take into account the cultural, economic and political realities of the country. Any policy that fails to acknowledge the singular nature of these crimes and which is unaccompanied by attempts to provide the support for the victim-survivor and help for the abuser is doomed to fail (UNICEF, 2000).

Research shows that battered women are reluctant to police intervention because they believe it to be a private matter, to be resolved within the family; they do not want their husbands or fathers to be prosecuted, they fear that reporting the matter to the police will result in more violence being inflicted on them, perceptions of the incident as minor and the issue not being important for the police. The one motive for getting police help is self protection (Felson et al. 2002). Thousands of cases that throng women police units in the state even though they believe that reporting their problems to the police will do little good and harm their marital status (Natarajan, 2003)

Legislation with regard to domestic violence is a modern phenomenon (UNICEF, 2000). The first problem that arises with legislation is that if the women withdraw the case under, the men cannot be prosecuted for beating up their wives. Since the spouse is the main witness, the law cannot proceed without her support. Quasi-criminal remedies like the protection order, that bounds to keep the perpetrator away is hardly used in India.



## **All Women Police Units/Stations (AWPS)**

Special women police stations, staffed with multi-disciplinary female teams equipped to respond to the different needs of victim-survivors, have been set up in several countries as an attempt to make police stations more accessible to women. In India, each station has social workers attached, which provide advice and support, referring women to support networks and suggesting other options. These stations are designed to provide comprehensive support to women, including social, legal, psychological, housing, health, day care services. They respond to many levels of support that a victim of domestic violence needs.

In the early 90's the Tamilnadu government decided to introduce All Women Police Units to deal with crimes against women, especially dowry disputes. It was felt that women victims would feel more comfortable to share their problems with women. A study by Natarajan (2005) in 188 AWPSs in the state showed that victims did indeed value the opportunity to confide their problems to female officers, and that intervention by these officers was helpful in reducing abuse and violence. In her previous studies, however, she has found that the officers in the AWPSs were not trained professionally to resolve disputes. They also lacked training in interviewing and counselling and instead relied on what they had learned through experience. In many units, her research found that, support from social workers and psychologists were very limited. The research further added that these problems were compounded by the complexity of the cases and an increasing workload. Many officers found it difficult to make decisions about the best way to handle the cases and they felt that they could not give the necessary attention to women petitioning for help with their problems.

In 2003 gender sensitisation training was given to all 4000 women police in the state. PCVC was responsible for training them in the issue of domestic violence and methods of communication and empathising with the victim. No follow up or research was done from the side of the training academy to analyse the impact of the training.

Among factors that perpetuate domestic violence, insensitive treatment of women and girls by police and judiciary has been listed (Heise, 1994). Debate regarding the magnitude of the problem is also clouded by the fact that domestic violence is a crime that is under-recorded and under-reported. When women file a report or seek treatment, they may have to contend with police and health care officials who have not been trained to respond adequately or to keep consistent records. On the other hand, shame, fear of reprisal, lack of information about legal rights, lack of confidence in, or fear of, the legal system, and the legal costs involved make women reluctant to report incidents of violence.

Most police, prosecutors, magistrates, judges and doctors adhere to traditional values that support the family as an institution and the dominance of the male party within it. The police are particularly well positioned to provide assistance to victim-survivors, but very often their own prejudices, lack of training, and reluctance to intervene hinder them from dealing with domestic violence.

Training of law enforcers and medical and legal professionals who come in contact with those experiencing violence is important to understand gender violence, to appreciate the trauma of those suffering and to take proper evidence for criminal proceedings. The nature of the crime of domestic violence requires the intervention of the community to assist and support victim-survivors.

Community workers play an important role in identifying violence, raising awareness about such issues and directing survivors to the correct procedures for seeking redress. Counseling serves as an alternative sentencing option especially in cases where women prefer that their partners "get help" rather than be punished.

An integrated, multidisciplinary approach with the criminal justice system and the service providers working together to gain a holistic understanding of each particular case and the needs of the individual is the best option. Giving attention to the real-life context of the battered woman, her hopelessness, dependency, restricted options, and her consequent need for empowerment, should underpin every approach. The goal is to work with her to develop her capacity to decide her own future.

## **Udayam-PCVC Community Support Unit**

The International Foundation for Crime Prevention and Victim Care (PCVC) is a non-governmental organization in Chennai, India that works to address the problems of women survivors of domestic violence and offer support services. PCVC's mission is to facilitate the process by which women with abusive partners develop self-empowerment and material independence. The profile of our client groups cuts across class lines, and their problems are manifold: physical beatings, economic and emotional manipulation, sexual violence and coercion, and acid or kerosene burns inflicted by partners or in-laws. Our goal is to provide and locate resources for women in situations of domestic violence, and to validate and respect our clients' ongoing processes of independent decision-making.



Crisis intervention or counseling includes helping the victims in expressing their thoughts and feelings about the trauma, educating them about the choices they have and helping them chose a violence free life. We recognize that men are not excluded from victimization and therefore also provide services to men who have experienced domestic and sexual violence.

Broadly the services of the organization include: 24 hour crisis line staff who provide non-judgmental support, information and referral; support groups; court advocacy including accompanying to court; emergency and interim shelter for victims; 24 hour accompaniment for support and advocacy at hospital emergency room or police station; and drop-in support center during office hours.

### **Initiation of an NGO-run Community Support Unit at an AWPS:**

On Friday the 13th May, 2005, Amudha a central government employee was brutally stabbed by her husband, in broad daylight in Ashok Nagar. Two days later, 15th May, Saroja, a housemaid was chased on the streets of Mylapore, again in broad daylight, and thrashed by her husband. She struggled for life for 5 days and passed away at the General Hospital on 20th May, 2005. Her husband, an alcoholic, was said to have stated that he hit her everyday but didn't know that she would die this time. These are two stories of women who have been violently murdered by their partners. There are many more such instances that perhaps do not come to light.

To provide crisis support services to such victims, the organization set up a **PCVC Community Support Unit** at the **Anna Nagar Police Station** on an experimental basis for one year starting August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005. There are totally 34 AWPS in Chennai city. The Annanagar AWPS was set up in the year 2002. They receive an average of 10-12 petitions per day.

The key objective of the project was to add NGO services to police endeavours to reach out to domestic violence victims and help them avail remedy and relief. An orientation was given to the police personnel before the project was started. They were assured that the project personnel will not interfere with their working and only on referral by the police personnel the project counsellors will assist the victims. A press release carrying the crisis line numbers was given prior to the inaugural that covered both English and Tamil local and neighbourhood newspapers. Posters were stuck in shops, malls, clinics, police booths, and autos in the area. A co-coordinator was available at the Police Station, from 9am to 5pm to give information on support services offered by NGOs. The crisis line was a 24 hours service and the police personnel could also call the NGO to accompany them on home calls.

The project coordinator accompanied the mobile police unit to help create awareness on social issues including eve teasing, domestic violence, teenage pregnancies and violence-free, healthy and safe relationships at schools, colleges, residential flats and welfare associations. Three crisis counsellors were available to counsel the victims at the station, on police referral. The project coordinator would, on consultation with the Inspector of the police station, list out cases that would need follow up and visit the survivors at their residence. If they were not found to be in a satisfied state they were asked to report to the station again. In a few special cases, the counsellor would make regular visits and even offer counselling at home for the couple. The coordinator along with a woman police officer did a door-to-door awareness by giving an info card with the crisis numbers. The project also documented the cases and case management was done at in coordination with the police.

### **Evaluation:**

Evaluation was done at the end of the experimental period in two ways, an external evaluator had detailed discussions about the project, its merits and demerits, with the police personnel, the NGO personnel, and petitioners, randomly chosen. An evaluation report was submitted. Secondly, a statistical evaluation was made comparing the previous year's data (cases/petitions) and the project period data.

### **Findings:**

1. The number of petitions given to the station, between August 2004 to July 2005, was 294, while the number between August 2005 to July 2006 was 243. Counselling was given to 3.74% of the cases in the year 2004-2005 while in the project period, 59.25% of the cases were referred for counselling. While 65.30% of the cases chose to go back to their husbands in the year 2004-2005, 34.15% of the cases went back home in the project year. While 32.65% chose to separate from their husbands in the previous year, only 10.28% chose to do so in the project period. In the previous year, 3.06% came back to the police station for help a close percent of 4.52 came back for help during the project period. 27.55% follow-ups were done in the previous year; nearly 33.74% of follow-ups were done in the project period.



2. The women police personnel found the project extremely useful. The presence of a coordinator at the station, they felt, helped them offer a wide range of options to the women victims. Reference to the coordinator immediately gave the victims hope and confidence that action was taken and that the police were considering the issue seriously. Counselling was the most sought after option. They police felt that the project has bridged the gap between the NGO's support services to domestic violence victims and the women police's duty to offer protection and prevention of harassment at home.
3. The women police felt that the project in a way changed their attitude towards the issue of domestic violence and gave a better understanding of the dynamics of the problem. Rather than blaming the victim and giving her the only option to go back and try living again they have been able to provide her with more options. Linking her to the services available immediately also gave them the satisfaction that they were doing justice to the issue.
4. Further case management at an overall level, at the NGO and the police, helped both the agencies know what was happening to the abuser and the victim, especially when they were called to the station more than once.
5. The police felt it very helpful and effective to have the NGO coordinator also address the community while on mobile policing and awareness programs. The dissemination of the crisis line numbers, they felt, gave their endeavour more credibility.
6. The NGO personnel felt during follow-up that some survivors were thankful that a non-uniformed personnel visiting them was 'safer' than a uniformed police officer. They felt it prevented the neighbours or relatives at home looking at her or both of them or the family as a whole, as having 'a problem'.
7. The NGO personnel also felt that the survivors and the perpetrators hesitated in offering bribes and material gifts to the police personnel, preventing embarrassment to the police officers and challenging their integrity.
8. The women police felt that taking an NGO personnel along in case of home calls was better in several ways, like offering crisis intervention immediately, evaluating risk factors, and removing the victim if necessary-victim support and safety.
9. The women victims fearing the stigma of contacting the police did not have to avoid seeking help. They had the NGO as a 'helper' backed by the police. This helped many women come out and seek help for their problems.
10. Many victims contacted the crisis line number and asked for help requesting the police not intervene directly.
11. The counsellors said that cases that approached the station were mainly those who had problems with their in laws and husband or breach of promising to marry. Dowry was not necessarily the issue and many victims understood that the AWPS did not exist just for dowry problems but domestic abuse.
12. The cases were assessed by the police personnel based on the one incident that brought her to the station. Risk assessment at a systematic level was not done.
13. The counsellors also expressed that legal awareness about divorce, separation and victim rights was very poor or nil among the victims coming to the police station. A brief education did help them in their decision-making.
14. Although the provision of taking digital photos was given the police personnel did not feel the need for it much.
15. The project personnel were unable to insist on photos of injuries to be taken as it was not on the protocol of the police.

#### Implications of the Udhayam Project and other successful Coordinated Projects:

The Udhayam project on the whole,

- provided a response to police assisted referrals.
- developed a partnership with the police to enable domestic violence specialists to work with police within the All Women Police Station.
- develop a range of resources for the women victims approaching the women police station.

The project provided specialist domestic violence information and support to victims of domestic violence enabling them to stay safe while in the system and be supported through the process from the complaint stage through to prosecution. The pilot project provided an intensive support to victims who may otherwise have dropped charges. The



co-location of the NGO personnel and the police within a single unit further advanced the cooperative working relationship developed between the All Women Police and the service organization. On the whole the program has provided a mechanism for enhanced support to domestic violence victims using an integrated approach.

Effectively dealing with domestic violence requires enhanced and effective coordination and collaboration among different service systems and organizations that often do not ordinarily work together. Some examples of coordinated collaborative justice models are the San Diego Model, the Duluth Minnesota Model, Canberra Act and the Goldcoast Queensland Model.

The **San Diego** Police Department has one of the largest specialized Domestic Violence Investigation Units in the USA. The Domestic Violence Unit is part of the Family Protection Unit of the San Diego Police Department. The Domestic Violence Unit plays a crucial and pivotal role in domestic violence investigations. Operational police respond to the initial domestic violence call, conduct an investigation, arrest on probable cause, notify victim advocacy services and file a computer driven report. The case is then followed –up by a detective from the Domestic Violence Investigation Unit who then checks for prior offences and domestic violence related calls, exams the evidence (including photos, video interviews, 911 tapes and police and medical reports), and prepares the case for prosecution. An officer from the Unit may also re-interview the victim and, if needed, obtain further photos of injuries.

The case is then sent to the City Attorney Domestic Violence Unit who prosecutes all misdemeanor cases of domestic violence. Since its inception in 1986, the Domestic Violence Unit has evolved into one of the largest and most comprehensive one-stop family violence units in the nation with a staff of 11 prosecutors, 3 advocates, 3 investigators and admin staff.

The Domestic Violence Unit of the San Diego City Attorneys Office has adopted many progressive approaches to domestic violence including the following:

- Aggressively prosecute misdemeanor domestic violence cases in order to stop the violence
- Providing early intervention at the misdemeanor level in order to prevent the escalation of offenders' behavior to felony level conduct
- Shifting the focus from victim responsibility for prosecution to a focus on offender accountability
- Enhancing victim safety by safety planning and strong victim advocacy
- The development of a strong multi-disciplinary, inter-agency response to domestic violence family violence
- Promoting community awareness about domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse, statutory rape and stalking cases
- Holding batterers accountable by not dropping or reducing charges at the request of victims

In 1981, **Duluth** became the first community in the US to develop a coordinated community response to domestic violence. Fifteen city, county and private agencies in Duluth adopted policies and procedures which coordinated their interventions in domestic violence assault cases. Formal agreements with agencies that deal with domestic violence have been developed including victim advocates, law enforcement officers and administrators, prosecutors, probation officers, court administrators, mental health services, policy makers and judicial officers.

The purpose of developing a coordinated community response in Duluth was to protect victims of domestic violence from further acts of abuse and to hold abusers accountable for their behavior. They have achieved this through combining legal sanctions, behavior change programs and where necessary incarceration. Victim safety is the central focus of all project development and interventions.

The key activities of the Duluth Model fall under one or more of eight activities;

1. Creating a coherent philosophical approach which centralises victim safety
2. Developing "best practice" policies and protocols for intervention agencies
3. Reducing fragmentation in the system's response
4. Building monitoring and tracking into the system
5. Ensuring a supportive community infrastructure
6. Intervening directly with abusers to deter violence
7. Undoing the harm violence to women does to children
8. Evaluating the system's response from the standpoint of the victim



The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) is the coordinating agency for the project. For more than twenty years, DAIP have tracked and monitored domestic violence assault cases at the same time working with various agencies to improve their system responses from the perspective of victim safety. In 1995, DAIP embarked on a project to enhance the existing coordinated response within the community. This included additional training, new methods of risk assessment, implementing new sentencing recommendation procedures, developing a computerized information system to track and monitor domestic violence cases, and implementing extra men's non-violence programs.

The Family Violence Intervention Program (FVIP) is a coordinated criminal justice and community response which first began in **Canberra** in 1998.

FVIP is a partnership between government and non-government agencies and includes the Department of Justice, Australian Federal Police, ACT Magistrates Court, ACT Corrective Services, ACT Legal Aid Office, Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Relationships Australia and various women's shelters.

The principal aims are, when matters are reported to police, to improve victim safety and increase perpetrator accountability by:

- Encouraging the collection of evidence and active pursuit of charges where prima-facie evidence of the offence exists
- Providing victim support throughout the criminal justice process
- Ensuring appropriate charges are prosecuted with appropriate regard for the wishes of the victim
- Actively case tracking criminal family violence matters
- Conducting hearings in a specialized court list to fast-track family violence cases
- Introducing new sentencing option of a perpetrator education program for certain sorts of offenders.

( Keys Young 2000)

The **Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response** was developed in 1997 and has continued to develop and grow and is now considered a model of Best Practice across Australia. The rationale in developing a Gold Coast Integrated Response to Domestic Violence was that an effective multi-agency approach to domestic violence on the Gold Coast could provide coordinated, appropriate and consistent responses aimed at

- Enhancing victim's safety
- Reducing secondary victimization
- Hold abusers accountable for their violence.

There are several projects which have been developed and implemented to provide for the above including:

- Police Fax-Back
- Police Project S.A.F.E.R
- Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program
- Domestic Violence Offender Education Program

Considerable work has been undertaken on the development of clearly articulated principles, aims and protocols, both within participating agencies as well as across agencies. Agencies involved within the Integrated Response continue to work together collaborative to enhance the interventions and responses to domestic violence.

Though the above-mentioned models differ from each other, they have the core elements necessary for the establishment of a successful multi-agency approach to domestic violence.

## **Conclusion:**

Victims of domestic violence suffer from various forms of abuse ranging from physical to emotional, sexual, financial and social abuse. Much of the violence committed in relationships, occurs on a continuum ranging from menacing phone calls, threats, physical attacks and in some cases murder. No matter what form it takes, the dynamics of abuse are the same and women are mainly the victims. Domestic violence cuts across all strata of the society, economic or social. The abuse most often occurs over a considerable length of time – usually years, and is rarely a single “unexplained” incident.



Largely, domestic violence in India continues to be considered a 'domestic' or social problem best dealt with outside the criminal justice system. Though the special law has been enacted, the legislation is yet to be adopted. The matter most often does not go beyond the home and if at all it is reported it is 'resolved' mostly within the police station. Even though 55,000 petitions were registered in the year 2004 in the 195 AWPS in the State (The Hindu, Aug 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005) the Crime Review Tamilnadu (2004) shows that only 6310 cases of crimes against women were reported in Tamilnadu under different categories.

The Udhayam Project is the first integrated response program towards domestic violence in Chennai. The project was successful in providing victim support and reducing secondary victimization besides listing resources for domestic violence victims. This pilot project validates the need for an integrated justice model. A full-fledged five year project systematically planned would no doubt lay the foundation for a successful integrated response to domestic violence model that could be replicated in other parts of India and other Asian countries. A research into successful integrated justice models, especially the Gold Coast model, which is more recent and a practical model that could be adapted to an Asian setting, can be an inspiration for a realistic project.

Responses to domestic violence in India undeniably need a change. Programs and responses at present mostly function in isolation to each other with little or no coordination between them. Building an integrated response to domestic violence takes time, energy, commitment and a vision that things can be done better, safer, more efficiently (Gold Coast, DVIR, 2005). The motivation for doing things changes from community to community. It may come from tragic events, lack of resources or lack of proper response from various agencies. Like the Gold Coast project the catalyst for change for the Chennai community were the two murders that took place within 10 days and went unnoticed. The murdered women had wanted help and reached out to the police stations.

A coordinated, appropriate and consistent response aimed at enhancing victim's safety, reducing secondary victimization and hold abusers accountable for their violence is the key for ensuring that every home is a safe home.

A multi-agency model of intervention with organizations working collaboratively and cooperatively together has the potential to not only enhance the responses to victims and their families but also maximise the effective use of resources within and across agencies (Gold Coast, DVIR, 2005).

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# Transformational Imaginations To Build Strengths<sup>i</sup>

Venkat PULLA<sup>1</sup>

## About our ability to predict futures:

Something common to Meteorologists and Futurologists is a constant struggle with predictabilities. Both use the expression 'may be' a lot. Mal Warrick, Author and Public Speaker, asserts that 'Humankind's track record in envisioning its future has been extremely poor' as we continue to live with 'complex systems that guide our lives'. We appreciate that even the very best of motives can lead to outcomes that we never considered, such as heroin, originally invented as a way to cure people of addiction to morphine. What else could we do in such cases other than accepting such factual inventions as results of the Law of Unforeseen Consequences? (Warrick June, 16, 2006)<sup>ii</sup>

As Homo sapiens we expect our lives to continue along pretty much the same lines as they did in the past, relentlessly. We don't particularly relish change or expect it, and struggle with nature and history as both hardly open out in straight lines. And yet we expect to live along the lines of a mythical human construction called consistency. We are unanimous about in our expression of dis-ease at the sight of interruption and change that rule our universe. And yet we exercise our choice to blink at these two phenomena. Blink is an apt description, just that short moment when you don't see and despite being awake to realities that are around us. We manifest our disagreement with change through bodily reactions such as stiffness of neck or rashes and redness on our face. Apply the same analogy further and take it to social groups, organisations and nation states – that 'blink' manifests as situational reflux and acquire a variety of forms. Protests, mass hysteria, misguided patriotism and anything that we would not like to explain by using the law of unforeseen consequences. This is where Mal Warrick stops and I wish to begin my series of conversations with you. I am here like many of you deeply involved in trying to make things work on the ground. But like some of you I gave my time and gave myself the permission to dream and to envision a different kind of future.

Time will perfect some of my thoughts, dreams and visions. When I lift my head I can see and grasp several possibilities for positive living and positive change. Change is right here for those individuals, groups, organisations, -public, private or non-profit if they believe in interconnectedness of the human species. Complex challenges of today exceed the capabilities of any single individual's coping. No group can survive on its own. No organisation's public, private, or nonprofits can hang on to a statement for survival independent of each other or journey their own way to strengthen their aspiration, and goals. There is no myself without you. *Martin Luther King summed it up so beautifully. When he says 'I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be'.* This is the 'interrelated structure of reality'. It is about interdependence. Signals of the world are different now, the dangers greater, and our old system of unconscious adaptation has reached its limits. Perhaps it is time we thought differently. And it is time we act differently. In this first conversation with you I hope to sharpen some of my thoughts.

## Relevance of Gandhi

We are meeting in the land of Gandhi. He said 'be the change you wish to see in the world'. Focussing on building Strengths in individuals, groups, communities, organisations and society at large is the only way one would challenge the existence of deficits. But surely we start with the strengths. To Gandhi's India, this is not a new technique or a body of knowledge. Gandhian values of self reliance being the primary one. Gandhi in 1921 wrote in

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Young India that he 'considered removal of untouchability as a most powerful factor in the process of attainment of Swaraj or self rule for India.

What is it that I could say in a land of Gandhi, and to this audience? Apart from reiterating that the core values that actually constitute the basis for strengths based practice are from Gandhi?

Being fair and respectful to all; focussing on strengths; assisting a self directed change to make changes that are meaningful and significant to them and reflect on how they want their situation to be.

While the above appears to be a shade simplistic of what is being canvassed as strengths based perspectives, those elements provide the context for community engagement practice in today's western world. To be retold that the power within in the strengths based practice gave India its independence is something that would make every South Asian in the audience feel proud of their common struggle for independence in the Indian sub continental region. Inherent and crucial in this practice was the element of morality and ethics that Gandhi espoused, practiced and went on non violent hunger strikes when other followers differed with him in practice. Means of achievement were as important to him as ends. Gandhi recognised that no one could develop the other unless there was a struggle within the oppressed to develop and grow. Gandhi saw the dominated people also as alienated people; India of the bygone era presented a clear pathology, a picture of people living outside the margins of the villages as victims of social disadvantage. Their apathy, fatalism and even indifference required much needed attention and in his opinion were more important than liberation from the foreign rule. (Pulla Venkat R 1987)<sup>iii</sup>

### **Partnering for Societal Development**

It is a tribute to Gandhi that he applied only positive thoughts and positive strategies across a wide range of our social institutions. What we see in today's business leaders turning to welfare and greater good of the society such as George Soros, Bill Gates is a yearning to give back to the society from where they received a great deal. In giving they are growing. Indian business houses such as the Tata's pioneered this trend in the last century. The first business families to join in a movement that looked after each other's interest.-Workers and Owners. Peter Drucker talks about the growing popularity of "today's business/nonprofits partnerships leading the biggest change in philanthropy since the rise of the foundations some 100 years ago, he eludes is a shift from philanthropy to investment. – However it is my belief that a true strength based partnership to build communities that are healthy, businesses that are growing and societies that are peaceful one needs both public and private enterprises together with the non-profit sector into building both social as well as physical infrastructures Quality education, health care, housing, economic development, culture, sports, civic and environmental improvements need to be seen from a human rights perspective. There is no government on earth that can meet the demands of its people when certain sections of the society keep to themselves a lion's share to themselves. Strength based partnerships to build the world would subscribe to what Gandhi often used to say. 'There is everything here for everyone's need but not enough for some people's greed'.

### **A 'Rights' Question**

What use is it that societies produce so much wealth yet continue to allow more than one half of Homo sapiens to live in sub human existence? We belong to a great majority of the human species that 'blinks'. Period. We only differ in matters of degree and length in our blinking. My colleagues and country men from Australia can vouch that even in the great western world we have badly managed and frugally funded initiatives that consider the poor, that reach their marginalised and their disabled members of their societies. That wealth is simply not there in their governments.



Who should ensure that fair treatment of human rights? Police in our societies? National governments? Another foreign body -a well paid competent ombudsman belonging to a body like United Nations, whose competency in overseeing is negated each and every day by the big bulls and hawks that believe 'some men and some societies are more equal than others? Who will enforce those rights and duties in a civil society?

While we deliberate on the intricacies of this process the marginalised truly support themselves and empathise with each other much better. Changes that sweep in when the socially disadvantaged take agenda into their hands will paralyse our eyes and we may need to elect yet another body reaction if we do not become aware and support and speed up sensible strategies in the 'rights' side direction. Here are two instances from not so distance past of expressions of solidarity of those who were disadvantaged and their acts of empathy to each other.

They know how it felt, and now they're reaching out to those going through it. Insafi Gulo was asleep when the Tsunami rocked Indonesia and the five-story building collapsed, trapping her beneath piles of rubble. She eventually freed herself, losing her right foot in the process. Far from being down, a year later, she's goes all the way from Indonesia to help Hurricane Katrina victims, ripping out drywall and hammering nails in devastated communities along Mississippi's Gulf Coast. They're a team of eight, who, having witnessed international relief firsthand, are now reciprocating with some of their own. That is just one way of keeping our eyes open. What are they teaching us? About sharing and about love perhaps. Are these strengths? Undoubtedly they are and contentment to this half the world population that lives in poverty has these remarkable values amidst their greatest strength the resilience to be. To dare to live.

Every year, 'Teen People' an organization honors '20 Teens Who Will Change the World'. This year's (2006) list includes 19-year old Given Kachepa who is helping illegal immigrants who have fallen prey to human traffickers. Molly Farrell who bounced back from a paralyzing swimming accident to raise \$285,000 for Christopher Reeve Foundation. Fareh Ahmedi who published an autobiography chronicling her experiences of losing a leg in a landmine and most of her family to a rocket in Afghanistan and a Cody DeWitt who made a documentary after learning of mother's diagnosis of cancer.

#### **A parallel thought in between:**

The meaning of life is to find your gift; the purpose of life is to give it away. --Joy J. Golliver. Is that it? Yes. It is.

Where are we leading this to? Strength based partnering initiatives geared towards meeting the major societal development issues namely reducing gross inequalities fostering social integration? And assisting each other in finding ways and means to reduce the impacts of every day stresses. It is better to look suffering straight in the eye, acknowledge and respect its presence, and then get busy as soon as possible focusing on things we choose to focus on.

#### **Two parallel thoughts in between:**

Man can no longer live his life for himself alone. We realize that all life is valuable and that we are united to all this life. From this knowledge comes our spiritual relationship with the universe. --Albert Schweitzer

and 'when we grow in spiritual consciousness, we identify with all that is in the world -- there is no exploitation. It is ourselves we're helping, ourselves we're healing' (Dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy USA)



## Making choices of peace and happiness

Therese Jacob-Stewart (2003)<sup>iv</sup> has been asking one question for a long time. 'What do we want? Happiness and when do we want it? Now, if not yesterday'. Therese continues to ask 'how many people do you know who actually experience happiness and peace regularly as a way of being?' Does any one come to your mind? By the way are you on this list?

Peace and happiness are powerful choices. Mind you, if you make this choice, it is possible, that in this journey, you may be out of your comfort zone; you might actually see more distress, turmoil, sadness and may even feel a shade more depressed. This is where you need to think what needs to be done. 'Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it'. (Michael Jordan-while coaching kids 2006)

Making the choice of peace and happiness is like making a choice of cleaning my house or my garage. Last week I was running crazy, working well beyond 17 hours constantly per day. I made that choice too: I gave myself permission to exercise yet another choice. I have books everywhere in my home and heaps more in my garage. A Typicality of a former academic clinging to his deeper self. I know many of you will relate to that. This happened, when I was looking badly for a reference book in the garage, a tin can fall on me and there was a lot of clutter that followed that fell through too. Junk collected over the years. All I did was move some of that from one place to another and pick up this very appropriate reference.

I was brooding over it for sometime, looked around, surveyed it and did nothing about it. But I closed my eyes and started imagining that a whole lot of people passed through my garage. I am sure they must have had some pleasant comments. I hate to think negatively even about their comments! Some of that wandering started hurting me, when I imagined that all those who passed through my garage may have construed that I was rank lazy. At a rational level I thought it was none of their business. It was my life style or choice from a previous clinging. I pretended because I did not hear, from them before. That's right they did not say anything to me. If they did it would have been confronting. I also did not hear because I did not say this to myself these two years. I am sharing this in confidence with you today that I have made a brave decision to throw that clutter after this Conference. Period. What was that due to? A transformational imagination?

## Transformational Imaginations

I invite you to see if you too could feed transformational imaginations. (TI) Mere imagination is meek. Mere imagination is like a mirage. Transformational imagination is something that builds on what you are, what you have today and what you wish to have tomorrow.

Now I figured out what I am saying. Transformational imagination is a process. A series of conscious steps, contemplative yet strategic, purposive but not bland. I asked a colleague if he would try. He did not want something extraordinary as he believed in small steps. Baby steps. He agreed and spoke to me that he imagined a crater full of flora and thriving green. He was ecstatic about this and was pretty clear not to budge from the scene.

For a moment I thought I am losing my ability to conceptualise and I thought may be my skill are rusted a bit – a bit as I earn my basic bread from a government and as most people agree we have some meaningful struggles to remain creative within in or rank powerlessness. I thought to myself about his baby steps and I like baby steps. The process of transformational imagination expects you to pause, take a deep breath, an extra moment to refurbish your brain with some prior knowledge that you read a long time ago. I realised quickly I could wear a jumpsuit as facilitator and ask him a question. That did the trick. In this scenario my colleague recalled that he read about volcanic activity causing craters at the place of previous imagination. After all what would a kiwi miss in Australia? That little bit extra greenery. I summed up and realised kiwis had more general knowledge than Australians.



## Transformational Pausing

The process of transformational imagination involves pausing. That pause will allow you to absorb a different fact and a different seismology of that place. Pause in life. Try that every moment. No, you would not become lazy. Don't take my garage too seriously. That will pass soon. On the contrary through the process of pausing you will become methodical, learn to understand and value the difference between what you have and what you wish to have. It is your 24 Karat key to your change. The change you want to be. It provides impetus to your personal transformation and provides you other keys for your organisation or work place.

I suggest that transformational imagination (TI) is a process of looking into the unconscious thoughts. I don't see unconscious thoughts as negativity. I don't see them as issues that you need to suppress and never talk about. I see them as an explored countryside. There is no need for fear to explore this unconscious for the fear of your privacy from your partners, loved ones or even your best friends. For, to start with, if they are your people and there is that interconnectedness, they will remain with you. It is you who needs to make that first step. To be brave, and to bring the heroic in you, that accepts the challenge and puts a step forward to pick up the transformational threads. Your key Potentials: Your hitherto unknown cues for the future. Who cares if predictive scientists and artists do not predict human happiness? You do now.

### TI surfaces true self

This is what Carl Jung called 'shadow' –a part of ourselves that we tend to submerge while we are still breathing on earth. Potential self contains shadows. It actually contains your true self. Transformational imaginations (TI) unearth that true self and assist you to begin your journey. Carl Jung goes further to explain that 'realising the shadow also gives us a practical problems'.<sup>v</sup> What do we do with muddy waters? We filter, and sip. This analogy may not work with most people as they tell me they drink only when doctor prescribes or they had a good time a day night before and are dehydrated for the day after. Fair enough, you can buy bottled water every where, but wouldn't drink until you are thirsty. This is when you will find your road. And when you find it your true self has already surfaced.

### A parallel thought in between:

Wanderer, your footsteps are the road, and nothing more; wanderer, there is no road, the road is made by walking. By walking one makes the road, and upon glancing behind one sees the path....

Anotonio Machado<sup>vi</sup>

As a final script to this conversation, I would add from an audio clip that I surfaced recently about a young Positive Psychologist Tai Ben Shahr)<sup>vii</sup> who is making a difference in Harvard University. His messages are very simple. Shahr urges:

- that firstly we need to give ourselves permission to be human. When we accept emotions -- such as fear, sadness, or anxiety -- as natural, we are more likely to overcome them. The suggestion here is that rejecting our emotions both positive and negative, actually leads to frustration and unhappiness.
- Happiness lies at the intersection between pleasure and meaning. Whether at work or at home, the goal is to engage in activities that are both personally significant and enjoyable. When this is not feasible, it would be worthwhile to consider what Shahr calls as 'happiness boosters', akin to descriptive narratives or moments throughout the week that provide us with both pleasure and meaning. As we all know that happiness is mostly dependent on our state of mind, not on our status or the state of our bank account.
- Barring extreme circumstances, our level of well being is determined by what we choose to focus on (the full or the empty part of the glass) and by our interpretation of external events.



- For example, do we view failure as catastrophic, or do we see it as a learning opportunity? Shahar is saying the simplest things that we know but he said them very nicely

While some parallel thoughts are occurring to you let me change the pace of our conversation with something that happened in my previous trips to India.

Several years ago, a few friends of mine travelled to India. One of them returned to her country away with what she saw in India. She saw gross inequities. She saw an ever-growing burgeoning population. She saw the contrasts of people and carried with her some powerful imagery, in mind, in photographs and in audio and video modes. She left nothing to chance. She also took with her some satisfying imagery of the contentment amidst poverty. She had profound images implanted in her brain about the simplicity of the rural folk and the uncomplaining attitude of those tribal women, who were building roads in Rajasthan. Two yards away on the same road that woman worker left her little child right in the sun with a piece of torn cloth as a sun shade. This hardworking woman impressed her. Ungrudgingly she smiled and gave my friend a lot. She smiled at her while my friend was feeling sad for her plight and that of the child in scorching sun. That one smile impacted on my friend. She returned to her country privileged by the lessons of patience and calmness and serenity and did not write a single story on emaciated cows being worshipped, some poignant photography of half burned dead bodies at Varanasi or about anything else that she felt very strongly about. She filtered her imaginations to give her self an opportunity for positive thoughts and did not want to download into a penguin or a pelican paper back of unchecked tourist impressions.

The balance sheet for cross cultural understanding is. One smile. 11070 US dollars to be precise, and a brand new video camera, confiscated by patriotic duty bound Indian customs officers. No reasons told and never returned the camera. Not to her in this life. In time and future, two women will never meet.<sup>viii</sup>

The key is to Simplify, what we see. What we need and manage what we can.

There is no reason to feel ashamed about our inabilities to manage empires.

There is no reason to raise our expectations in every human endeavour so high that we forget who we are and what we can do with the clay in our hands.

There is no reason to be generally, too busy, trying to squeeze in more and more activities into less and less time.

Quantity influences quality, and we compromise on our happiness by trying to do too much.

Express gratitude, whenever possible.

We too often take our lives for granted. It is time that we begin to learn to appreciate and savour the wonderful things in life, from people to food, from nature to a smile.

Finally welcome aboard: Your Conference on Strengths based Strategies 2006 has just begun. I am grateful to you for this conversation and to the divine providence.

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This is a draft only Speech notes delivered on 10, November, 2006 at the Strength Based Strategies Conference 2006 at Hyderabad, India. Please do not quote without writing to the author.

ii Mal Warwick - Jun 16, 2006 8:05 am Social Edge  
Author, consultant, public speaker

iii Pulla Venkat, Working With Rural Poverty Groups, (Pages 89) Hivos, Netherlands, Utrecht, 1987

iv Stewart-Therese Jacobs, "Paths are Made By Walking", Warner Books New York 2003

v Jung Carl (The collected works of CG Jung, Volume 5 and 9 Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1966

vi Machado Antonio, Spanish Poet, Essayist and dramatist- a translation- Selected Poems of Antpnio Machado, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979

vii Audio from NPR "All Things Considered" (March 22, 2006) – The Secret to Happiness



[http://www.npr.org/dmg/dmg\\_wmref.php?prgCode=ATC&showDate=22-Mar-2006&segNum=7&mediaPref=WM&sauid=U971939001148017696515&getUnderwriting=1](http://www.npr.org/dmg/dmg_wmref.php?prgCode=ATC&showDate=22-Mar-2006&segNum=7&mediaPref=WM&sauid=U971939001148017696515&getUnderwriting=1)  
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file:///C:/Custom%20Websites/Jaelline%20Jaffe/Harvard.htm (3 of 3)5/2 0/2006 6:37:32 PM Further notes:

The most popular course at Harvard University this semester teaches happiness. Positive Psychology, a class whose content resembles that of many a self-help book but is grounded in serious psychological research. This course has enrolled 855 students, beating out all other classes. 35-year-old Tal D. Ben-Shahar, the lecturer, describes how students might increase the likelihood of transformative, positive experiences through exercises that vary from cultivating a sense of gratitude for the beautiful things in their lives and meditation, to taking the time to really listen to music. I read about this young Lecturer, and he has some powerful messages for all of us *Tal Ben-Shahar (March, 2006)*

<sup>viii</sup> Currently I have not obtained my friend's consent to talk about a large number of her useful images. I have withheld identification details.



# Strengths Perspective in Mental Health (Evidence Based Case Study)

Rangan Aarti, Sekar K.

*Mental health services are primarily concerned with early diagnosis and treatment, apart from preservation and promotion of good mental health and prevention of mental illness. Over the past few years, a strengths-based approach to case management with people with severe mental illness has emerged. This paper reviews empirical evidence and illustrates an evidence based case study to validate the existing literature on the strengths perspective in treating mental illness. The exploration of the strengths perspective as it relates to the evidence based case study shows that the strengths perspective influences both the well-being and the coping of people with mental illness.*

## Introduction

Psychiatry ascribes and uses the disease model in treating mental health problems and mental illnesses. The tenets of the disease model of diagnosing the deficits are used to prescribe pharmacology and psychosocial treatment, to help the persons with mental illness cope with their problems. However, over the years, a shift in perspective from the diagnostic approach to a more functional approach, i.e. using a strengths-based approach to case management with people with severe mental illness has emerged (Saleebey, 1992; Sullivan & Rapp, 1994; Weick, Rapp, Sullivan & Kisthardt, 1989). Though the strengths approach, with its emphasis on growth and change, collaborative relationship, and the centre of change located in the client, is diametrically opposite to the pathology based approach used in treating mental illness; it still shows promise in improving the well being and quality of life of persons with mental illness (Saleebey, 1996). This paper uses a case illustration to demonstrate how mental health professionals can assess the strengths of the client, select tailored interventions and help the client improve their well being and quality of life.

## The Strengths Perspective

The strengths approach attempts to understand clients in terms of their strengths. This involves systematically examining survival skills, abilities, knowledge, resources and desires that can be used in some way to help meet client goals (Saleebey, 1996). The helping process from initial contact, goal identification, assessment and intervention to evaluation has the underlying assumptions that human beings have the capacity for growth and change (Weick, 1992), knowledge about one's situation (Early & GlenMaye, 2000), resilience (Garmezy, 1994) and membership (Walzer, 1983). The major focus in practice from the strengths approach is collaboration and partnership between social workers and clients. Other methods include environment modification and advocacy (Early & GlenMaye, 2000). This method has not only emerged as an approach to case management for people with severe mental illness (Saleebey, 1992; Sullivan & Rapp, 1994; Weick, Rapp, Sullivan & Kisthardt, 1989), but also with other client groups.

Literature indicates that strengths perspective influences both the well-being and the coping of people with mental illness (Saleebey, 1996). The strengths perspective, along with its assumptions and strategies, is explored in this article as it relates to the case of a married woman who presented with problems to the Psychiatric Social Worker.

## Case Illustration

*Mrs S, a 26 year old married female, from middle-socio economic status, semi-urban background, educated up to 12<sup>th</sup> standard, was diagnosed with Dysthymia, Marital discord and primary infertility. Her complaints included negative cognitions, suicidal ideations, reduced sleep and appetite, vague sensations in the body, abnormal beliefs that she will beget a child, negative feelings towards in-laws, husband and unresolved feelings towards her inability to beget a child and her religious affiliation. Psychotropic medication has helped control suicidal ideations and depressed cognitions and she has undergone therapy with a social worker affiliated with a National Institute of Mental Health..*

*An assessment of Mrs S's case showed that her marital subsystem was not formed properly. Even after 6 years of marriage, the interaction between the spouses was minimal and need based and Mrs S was unable to conceive. The result of the infertility test stated that the patient had a weak uterus and her husband had low sperm count. She also expressed her inability to efficiently carry out the household activities according to the expectations of her in-laws. Mrs S felt dominated by her husband and her in-laws who constantly criticized her for not meeting their expectations.*



*Mrs S changed her religion to Christianity, as she was told that Lord Jesus would help her to have a child. She told everybody that Jesus had come to her and had told her that she would beget a child. However the pregnancy test was negative and she did not give birth to a child on the assigned date. All through the nine months of assumed pregnancy she kept making people believe that her stomach was bulged and used to treat herself as a pregnant lady. In the last six months, before the delivery date, patient stated having severe body sensations and depressed cognitions, which troubled her and prompted her to attempt suicide multiple times.*

*Mrs S's therapist assessed that she had a protected childhood, was married at a very early age and thus was not mentally prepared to take on responsibilities after marriage. Mrs S had symptoms of anxiety and depression which she associated with her belief that she was not a perfect housewife. She harbored guilt feelings, feelings of inadequacy (low self esteem and inferiority complex) and blamed herself for disputes in the house. It appeared that Mrs S had high expectations from herself and her marriage. Her in-laws too seemed to have high expectations from her; however they shared a non-reciprocal relationship with her. When asked, Mrs S reported dissatisfaction with her ability to cope with the situation. Both Mrs S and her therapist agreed to work on modifying her environment and developing her resilience to deal with the situation.*

### **Capacity for Growth and Change**

A basic assumption of the strengths perspective, in keeping with the humanistic approaches to social work, is that humans have the capacity for growth and change (Early & GlenMaye, 2000). The case of Mrs S illustrates that individuals have many capabilities, abilities and strengths. Also they have a range of experiences, characteristics and roles, which contribute to who the person is and how he/she copes with the problem (Saleebey, 1997a; Weick, Rapp, Sullivan & Kisthardt, 1989). In case of Mrs S her range of experiences from a protected daughter to a submissive daughter-in-law, lack of primary support to support from the tertiary institution of the church and her inability to conceive to her illusions of child birth, all give us a perspective of how one client changed and adapted herself to deal with critical factors in her life.

### **Knowledge about One's Situation**

The strengths approach assumes that people have knowledge that is important in defining their situations – the problematic aspects as well as potential and actual solutions. Clients manage to survive, sometimes against great challenges (Early & GlenMaye, 2000). In the case of Mrs S, she has knowledge about her inability to cope with her in-laws and husband expectations (of being a perfect wife in household activities and begetting a child). She resorts to various methods such as converting her religion to cope with the critical events in her life. Client's knowledge about how they have managed so far can be useful in building their future.

### **Resilience**

The strengths perspective believes that human beings are resilient (Garmezy, 1994). In case of Mrs S, in spite of her husband and in-laws non-reciprocal relationship with her, she continued with her marriage for a period of 6 years. She compensated her lack of primary support by garnering tertiary support for self from the church; thereby providing instances of her ability to go on in spite of critical factors in her life (Rutter, 1985; Wolin & Wolin, 1993). In keeping with the growing body of research documents on resilience, Mrs S's case showed that in spite of her environment continually presenting demands (as a wife, daughter-in-law), challenges (inability to conceive) and opportunities (support from the church), she was able to use her ongoing and developing fund of energy and skill to face her current struggles (Anthony & Cohler, 1987; Garmezy, 1993; Haggerty, Sherrod, Garmezy & Rutter, 1994).

### **Membership**

The strengths approach ascribes that people need to be citizens – responsible and valued members in a viable group or community. Mrs S felt that she did not fit into the membership or community of a perfect daughter-in-law or wife and thus felt alienated, at risk of marginalization and oppression from her in-laws (Walzer, 1983). Collectively and individually as a member of the Christian faith, she began to realize and cope with her marital life; validating the fact that as people begin to discover the pride in having survived and overcome their difficulties, more and more of their capacities come into the work and the play of daily life (Saleebey, 1996).

### **Strengths and Interventions**

Individuals are experts on their lives, their strengths, resources and capacities; the social worker, as Saleebey (1997a) reported, helps to create the dialogue of strength. Interventions based on the strengths approach gives a perspective that the individual already is doing something to better their situation and it is the social workers job to help the individual identify the strengths and continue working in relation to goals and visions.



### ***Assessing Mrs. S's Strengths***

Literature states that strengths assessment focuses on identifying what the client is doing to make things better, what works, and what will facilitate the continuation of desired behaviours and situations. Primary focus of assessment is on what the client is doing "right" in relation to goals and vision (Early & GlenMaye, 2000). A strengths assessment asks the question, what kind of life does the client want? It focuses on the client's capabilities and aspirations in all areas of life's functioning (Ronnau & Poertner, 1993; Weick et al., 1989).

In order to assess Mrs S strengths, the social worker used the technique of conversations with the individual and family members to hear the client's story about how she has survived so far, what she wants, and how she thinks things are going in various areas of life (Cowger, 1997). According to Mrs S, her goal was to indulge in activities in keeping with the expectations of her in-laws, husband and self as a wife. This was a step towards her vision of improving her relationship with her husband and in-laws and living a better marital life.

Mrs S was not comfortable in thinking of herself or others in terms of strengths or as having emerged from scarring events with something useful and redemptive (de Shazer, 1991; Lee, 1994). Having been diagnosed as having a mental illness, she had inculcated in the doctrine of herself as deficient and needy (Holmes & Saleebey, 1993). One of the main complaints of the client was vibrations in the body, because of which she was unable to carry out any of her household activities. In a session with the client, the social worker found that the client experienced maximum vibrations (or anxiety symptoms) only when performing certain household tasks, interacting with relatives or when talking about her marital life. The maximum anxiety was observed in the morning as the client was apprehensive as to whether she would be able to carry out all the household activities efficiently in the day, according to expectations of her in-laws, and earn a good relationship with her in laws and husband.

An insight of the relationship between her anxiety and her performance as a wife, made the client realize that in spite of her anxiety she was able to complete the household activities in the day. Also her inert coping mechanisms helped her to maintain her marital relationship for six years in spite of discord. Her attempt to convert to Christianity was reflected to her as her coping strategy to deal with the lack of social support (GlenMaye, 1998). In this way, through the sessions with the social worker, Mrs S was able to understand and identify her strengths: psychological (coping strategies to deal with unfavourable family atmosphere) physiological (physical capacity to carry out household activities in the day with anxiety) and environmental (support of church) strengths (Cowger, 1997).

### ***Choosing an Intervention***

Collaborative exploration of strategies which focus on identifying internal, external, created and natural occurring resources becomes essential in choosing the interventions for the client. For tailoring the intervention towards client-defined goals, mutual strategizing by the therapist and client around building on strengths, skills, knowledge and desires is needed (Early & GlenMaye, 2000).

### ***Intervention with client***

Individual meetings between Mrs S and her therapist were scheduled for establishing trust and setting treatment goals. Mrs S's treatment goals were reduction of anxiety, to perform household activities effectively and efficiently, and to improve communication with her husband.

Mrs S believed in the power of prayer and meditation and reported feeling less anxious after prayer. It was thus decided that Mrs S would pray and meditate at regular intervals, especially before starting her work in the mornings, to reduce her anxiety levels in the day. Also regular visits to the church and taking a break from her household activities were discussed. To improve her performance at the household activities, the therapist helped the client plan her day and prepare an activity schedule. The importance of structuring her day and time management to complete all household activities effectively and efficiently was discussed with her. To improve her communication with her husband, Mrs S was taught basic communication strategies and was asked to take initiative in conversation, communication and in clarifying misunderstandings instead of waiting for others to do so. The importance of the husband as her strength and support system in times of distress was discussed.

### ***Involving the Client's family***

Working collaboratively with family members to identify strengths and goals of the client is a helpful strategy in environment modification (Early & GlenMaye, 2000). Mrs S's therapist, after meeting individually with her, would convene sessions with her mother, father, brother and husband, in order to identify her strengths and coping patterns and help her in modifying her environment. Her parents discussed that they would invite their daughter and son-in-law to stay with them in times of need and provide emotional support to their daughter if she felt alone and distressed. The therapist enhanced marital participation and involvement by soliciting husband's initiative in communication and listening to personal stories and narratives of the client in her times of distress (Saleebey, 1997b). In this way, involving the family influenced the client's environment to become more accepting and helpful



(Sullivan, 1992). It also can be seen as a resilience building strategy where the primary focus was to strengthen the protective factors of the client (Fraser and Galinsky, 1997).

### **Evaluation and Outcomes**

The strengths approach includes survivor pride (Benard, 1994; Wolin & Wolin, 1993), hope for the future, the ability to understand another's needs and perspectives, and the ability to identify and make choices about individual and family goals. Thus evaluation of the strengths approach would include whether goal attainment is continuously defined and redefined from the client's perspective (Early & GlenMaye, 2000).

Mrs S treatment goals were reduction of anxiety, to perform household activities effectively and efficiently and to improve communication with her husband. In the 6 monthly follow-up, the client reported 75% improvement in her health status. She was able to effectively carry out the household activities with less anxiety and complete her daily chores in according to the schedule she set herself. She practiced prayer and meditation regularly and sought the help of her parents and the church in times of distress. A year later, the client reported that the relationship between her husband and herself had improved drastically. The client reported that her husband was much more approachable and she was able to communicate her distress to him in times of need. Though her in-laws criticized her less about her work, Mrs S reported that they were not very reciprocal in their relationship with her. In view of the changing scenario at home, Mrs S felt more confident of coping with her marital life in the future.

### **Conclusion**

The empirical evidence underscores the strengths based perspective in tailoring appropriate therapeutic interventions for persons with mental illness. The case of Mrs S demonstrates how mental health professionals can assess the strengths of the client, help the client develop resilience, evaluate that treatment and empower the client to deal with future adversities. This case emphasizes how a client with mental illness can be helped to cope with critical factors through the use of their innate strengths and opportunities. It also shows mental health practitioners how to match the clients' strengths and opportunities to interventions and desired outcomes. Mental health professionals can thus help clients gain insight into their innate strengths, increasing resilience and improving their well-being.

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# Strengthening resilience within families in addiction treatment

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Families experiencing problems with alcohol dependence are fragile and harm related to alcohol is not confined to the drinkers themselves. Often, the victim of alcohol abuse is primarily seen as the individual problem drinker despite alcoholism being characterised as a family illness. Less is written or acted upon on the 'forgotten victims' - both spouses and children of the problem drinker's family who often hide the alcohol problem as a shameful secret and participate in the dysfunctional behavior. Social deprivation, poverty and stress compound the trauma and childhood in such a family is distressing - hidden to those outside the family and at times neglected by mental health professionals working in the field of addiction. *Research studies have now established that alcoholism runs in families and children of alcoholics are four times more likely than other children to become alcoholics (Goodwin et al, 1988).* Though genetic factors play a part, a balance between environmental and genetic factors is important.

The effect of strong family relationships on the potential negative effects of parental alcoholism contributes to resilience among children of alcoholics, shielding them from developing problems in childhood as well as the early development of alcohol problems in adolescence and adulthood (Report to the European Union on Alcohol Problems in the Family, 1988). The protective influences are healthy interaction within the family including cohesiveness, rituals celebrated in the form of festivals and traditions culturally relevant, routine activities like mealtimes, strong social support networks both within and outside the family and specific strategies to deal with stressful situations. The presence or absence of these factors help some alcohol-impaired families 'transmit' problems to the next generation while in others the cycle is broken.

Intervention in addiction treatment by mental health professionals has a tendency to focus mainly on the needs of the addicted parent with less attention to the affected family members. The children may be totally overlooked, remaining unattended and vulnerable to the vagaries of both genetic and family influences. *This paper is an attempt to present a framework for mental health professionals to go beyond routine interventions in addiction treatment. It includes specific areas and methods that strengthen key processes to make alcoholic families more resilient and children more resourceful to handle crises, equipping them to meet future challenges.*

## **Alcohol as a cause of family problems**

A number of studies conducted on the dysfunction in interaction patterns among the family members in alcoholic homes and the psychological problems faced by children of alcoholics have established that an alcoholic member in the family causes problems not only to themselves but also to their own families. (Channabasavanna and Bhatti, 1982; Venkataraman and Beig, 1988; Ramakrishnan and Shenoy 1991)

The parent's drinking disrupts normal routine family tasks and functions, affects roles played by the family members' increases conflicts by demanding adaptive responses and creates an economic drain on the family's resources. The family members deny reality at the initial stage and as the alcohol problem escalates and intensifies over time, they try numerous ways to deal with each crisis. They become 'co-dependent' in that their lives become just as dysfunctional as the addicted family member's, impacting their physical and psychological health resulting in low self-esteem, and unhealthy coping patterns. Families (both spouses and children) also experience a range of emotions: hurt and grief caused by the addicted parent's indifference to the family's feelings, a sense of helplessness - of not knowing what to do, loss of hope and fear- on the impossibility of any positive change, anger - misplaced towards the addicted person, themselves and to the community at large and finally, shame- caused by the painful experiences within and outside their home due to the family member's drinking behaviour. The family chooses to remain isolated to uphold this family 'secret' (T.T.Ranganathan Clinical Research Foundation, 1992).

Steinglass et al (1993) reported that the alcoholic family member's impact on children including spouses were unhealthy family interaction patterns, changed roles played by family members especially the spouse and eldest child, unpredictable routines at home, disruption of rituals and celebrations, restricted social life, recreational activities and financial problems.



### Effect on children

The children's physical and emotional demands are neglected. They do not share or talk about their suppressed feelings having no opportunity and develop mistrust because of the unpredictable behaviour of their parents. They take roles and responsibilities often inappropriate to their age, witness violence in different forms at home, feel guilty and responsible for their parent's behaviour. Faulty role modeling of both parents furthers the damage to children. The children face an increased risk of problems such as conduct disorders in the form of delinquency and aggression, emotional problems that are psychosomatic in nature such as asthma and bedwetting, feelings of self blame, low self worth, depression, negative attitudes and school related problems ranging from truancy to learning difficulties (Vellaman, 1993).

Within this milieu, children continue to grapple and move into their own adulthood. They learn to adopt roles, survive and to try hard to bring stability to their own lives – whilst being burdened with poor self esteem. Their emotional inadequacies continue to persist into later adult life as evidenced by large social movements of adults like the Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA). Thus, it is not a surprise that some of these children who experience parental alcoholism, start drinking at an early age themselves.

Despite the negative effects of parental alcoholism on the family especially on children (as discussed above), there appeared to be certain factors whose presence protected the children and kept them away from alcohol related problems or delayed its onset. This balance between environmental and genetic factors is important for children – and not family history of alcohol alone that makes someone an alcoholic or problem drinker (Report to the European Union, 1998).

### Protective factors contributing to resilience

*The role of family interaction* in families with an alcohol problem is a protective factor providing a supportive environment to the children. Families that valued relationships, have control over family life and maintain its special identity with a positive outlook provides a stable environment. Quality time allotted for family activities such as hobbies, sports and spending time together helps in bonding and promotes cohesion among family members. Positive role models for the children to look up to within and outside the family played a part and a non-drinking parent was found to be an important protective factor (Oxford and Vellaman, 1995). Positive interaction patterns through healthy communication, cohesive relationships, clear leadership and roles, support systems within and outside the family were found to contribute to positive well being of the individual family members (Bhatti et al, 1998). The family's ability to distance itself from adverse circumstances is another trait contributing to the family's resilience. This trait was called 'planning or deliberateness' by Vellaman (1995).

*The maintenance of family rituals* at the time of the parent's heavy drinking contributes to the child's well being as adults lowering the risk of transmission of alcohol problems. The preservation of distinctive family rituals (e.g. like mealtimes, regular bedtime) helps the family members disengage by separating from the alcohol behaviour of the parent and preserves the family's collective sense of self, stabilizes family life, clarifies expected roles and defined family rules (Bennett et al, 1987). According to Wolin and Jacobs, (1987), rituals fell into three groups-

1. **Family celebrations-** Relatively standardized rituals, specific to the subculture with widely shared symbols that assist families to assert their group identity and connectedness. They are holidays, rites of passage, and annual religious or secular celebrations.
2. **Family traditions** – Less culture specific and more idiosyncratic to particular families who choose their occasions. They are vacations, visits with extended families, anniversary customs and re - unions.
3. **Patterned routines** are most frequently enacted but least consciously planned family rituals, part of daily family life, defining member's' roles and responsibilities and such patterned routines provide reinforcement to the family's identity. Dinnertimes, bed time routines with children and regular leisure time activities belong to this category.

*The role of problem solving* at the time of the parent's heavy drinking is effective as it continues to help children in coping through adulthood. The support received from caring persons (within and outside the family), distancing from the dysfunctional situations, the ability to think through situations and formulate coping strategies have a protective role to play. Being resourceful, decisive and being flexibly separated from the dysfunction are other family strengths (Bhatti, 1998, Prabhugate, 2002). Moving from the phase of adolescence into adulthood, the learnt problem solving skills helps the children to be assertive, and resist peer pressure to use alcohol and drugs. This deliberateness was evident in the choices and decisions made by the now adult child, consciously planning on how to be different from the family of origin. Vellaman (1995), views this characteristic with optimism in that having to cope with adversity strengthened people as well as damaged them. It would be beneficial for mental health professionals, to consciously translate the above understanding into practice while addressing the needs of the family and children at risk in particular. A tendency among rehabilitation centres was to work with the addicted person in isolation, holding the family



apart almost viewing it as the root cause of addiction while others viewed the family as being ignorant about their manipulative behaviour and counselled them to help in the addict's recovery (Mane, 1989).

Addiction treatment centres address the physical and psychological problems faced by the addicted person at an individual level. Some treatment centres may have regular programmes for families, usually spouses or a significant family member- and address their difficulties related to living with the addicted family member. The specific needs of the children at risk often tend to be neglected, thereby missing an opportunity to enhance the protective factors that the family can afford.

### **Proposed framework for strengthening families in addiction treatment**

A strength based framework that goes beyond routine intervention is presented with specific areas that would be useful for clinicians in addiction treatment. The aim is to make families of alcoholics, and particularly children, more resourceful in dealing with crises and develop variable competencies to meet future needs.

The proposed framework will address family in totality in order to strengthen resources at inter and intra levels of the individual. Intervention is proposed at residential and non residential settings for parents and children and significant support persons in the absence of family supports. The pre and post adolescence stages of the children and developing needs would receive a major thrust in the interventions. Information presented may deploy a variety of media such as play and art therapy, puppetry, craft, role play quizzes, screening or special films and narrative story telling, to specifically impart skills.

- A. Assist family members to develop an appropriate attitude to help the addicted family member-** The purpose here is to address both parents and children. The mental health professional would give attention to problems experienced by the family members as a result of addiction by helping them to focus attention on themselves and see the need to change their attitude, behaviour and develop larger values- towards optimism and a positive outlook. For this, psycho-educational sessions would be conducted for the family by providing information on alcoholism, the processes of relapse and the family's role in treatment. As most of these families have not accessed social supports and do not have emotional resources, the proposed intervention creates deliberate opportunities for the family members to articulate their suppressed feelings about the alcoholic member including others in the family. As a family, they will have opportunities to appreciate inherent values and perspectives of each other as a source of strength, than conflict. Children in particular would be given an opportunity to express their feelings in a safe and acceptable environment building trust amongst them.

Thus, the *Psycho education focuses on*

- Addiction and course of the disease, relapse processes
- Role of family in treatment process and

*Facilitates:*

- Articulation and expression of feelings
- Trust building and a positive outlook

**B. Impart skills to improve family interaction, strengthen rituals and parenting** -Parents would be facilitated to learn new strategies aimed at changes in relating to each other by examining underlying causes of dysfunction and encouraging new and healthier interactions. Realistic appraisal and acceptance of self, others and life situations and a spirit of tolerance would be encouraged. Through role play, the mental health professional helps family members to improve communication amongst them by helping them learn to express their feelings effectively and improve listening skills.

It is also important to strengthen cohesive family relationships and help the family to maintain them. To foster this, the family would be helped to explore and concretely plan activities they can do together as a unit. It may constitute of recreational activities, family outings, spending time meaningfully together at home at least some part of the day and showing interest and concern in each others interests.

Celebrating festivals, observing family traditions are often linked to a larger heritage and belief system and helps in strengthening inner spiritual resources and serve as wellsprings of resilience. Simple routine activities such as eating at least one meal together daily fosters a sense of connectedness. The protectiveness of such healthy family interaction patterns, rituals and daily routines and its positive influence



on the children's psychological well-being in the long run would be discussed with parents. Support persons such as close relatives and friends can also be a part of this activity.

*Improve family interaction by strengthening:*

- Communication skills
- Rituals and daily routines- preparing a structure/ plan (short and long term) and periodic reviews
- Cohesion among family members
- Inner spiritual beliefs and philosophy
- Reality checks of self, others and life situations

*Psycho education sessions on:*

- Role of protective factors in children's well being

**Improve parenting**– The crucial roles that parents play in the lives of their children including the paucity of positive parental role models in alcoholic homes, the importance of the non drinking parent's role in fostering positive outcome for the children would be discussed. Attention would be brought to inappropriate parenting practices e.g. being permissive, authoritarian or inconsistent disciplining. The mental health professional would work towards improving parenting skills, rebuilding a trusting and nurturing relationship between parents and children.

*Parenting would cover the following issues:*

- Allotting time spent with children including recreational activities
- Visiting relatives and friends homes
- Encouraging positive qualities, appreciating your child
- Being a positive role model
- Setting limits and stating clear messages
- A daily routine activity viz. eating at least one meal together daily
- Listening attentively to your child
- Getting to know your child, her / his friends and interests

**C. To equip family members with positive coping skills** – The non – drinking family members and children would be addressed here. Opportunities to focus and distance themselves from the parent's drinking behaviour and to feel supported with positive coping strategies, using role play and addressing fatalism and helplessness by thinking through situations, finding alternative possibilities and deliberating on decisions about the best course of action are some of the strategies. This 'deliberateness' and 'selective disengagement' pattern from the stressful situation influences the children in adulthood by giving them an early opportunity to learn how to make choices and decisions by consciously planning on whether to continue to succumb or be different from their family of origin.

Learning to resolve conflicts through constructive collaboration would be discussed. The family members would be encouraged to focus on being 'family-centric' rather than 'self-centric'. Resources in the environment would be explored to meet the psychosocial needs of both the spouse and children. It would include mobilizing and strengthening supports at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels including self - help groups. *Provide skills on:*

- Positive coping methods
- Resolving conflicts collaboratively

*Assist in:*

- Improving support systems
- Family-centric outlook

#### **D. Equip children with specific skills to build resilience**

*Strengthening self esteem:* Developing self-confidence, focusing on positive aspects and minimizing negativity and learning to appreciate through positive strokes would be facilitated. Also helping the child learn to set personal short and long term goals, and reviewing the results would be an exercise to increase the child's self worth.

*Increase coping skills and conflict resolution:* Learning and practicing healthy coping patterns through role play is important for the children of alcoholics to help them develop a well integrated personality at the same time relate to others meaningfully (see coping skills in the previous section).

*Increase assertiveness:* Learning to practice assertive skills to resist negative peer pressure, taking responsibility for making choices and listing out healthy recreational activities would be addressed by the



mental health professional. Evaluating the past responses- of being passive, aggressive or assertive would help the child to see the consequences at the same time provide the opportunity to change the faulty responses. The child would be encouraged to rehearse assertive techniques in the therapeutic setting by role playing high risk situations based on alcohol and drug use in their locality.

*Skills to improve:*

- Self esteem and goal setting
- Coping positively
- Assertiveness especially in high risk situations

*Facilitate:*

- Encouraging healthy lifestyles
- Access to addiction related information through books, pamphlets, films

### **Implications for interventions beyond routine addiction treatment**

Interventions must move beyond routine addiction treatment by not only focusing on the addicted parent but instead tap and energize the whole family as a powerful resource. Mental health professionals must attempt to weave in some resilient oriented methods that are sustainable to foster family empowerment at the same time strengthen protective factors within families that will help children of alcoholics at risk, to delay or ideally prevent early onset alcohol dependence. Hence, the family must be assisted to find its own pathways through this adversity befitting their situation and culture using their personal strengths and resources.

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# **We Can End Violence against Women (Oxfam) – A Public Awareness Campaign Focusing on Modeling Solutions and Strengthening Communities**

Trupti Sreedharan

*This paper outlines the proposition, approach, and methodology for the south Asia regional campaign to end violence against women (the WE CAN campaign) that will be implemented in six countries -Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan.*

## **Campaign Rationale**

- One in every two women in women south Asia faces violence in her daily life
- Social customs and attitudes that support violence against women(VAW) are entrenched and institutionalized at all level-home, family, community, society and the state
- Underlying the acceptance of VAN is the deep-seated social belief that women are fundamentally of less value than men . This pervasive culture of patriarchy and VAW in the region affect women's lives, right and their opportunities in almost all spheres of life
- Despite successful actions by women's organisations over the past three decades, the scale and severity of discrimination and VAW is on the rise
- More than 50 million women are "missing" from the population in South Asia as a result. There are only 94 women for every 100 men and the situation is predicted to worsen
- To end VAW, it is important to challenge and change existing social attitudes that accept it as "normal" mobilize all sections of the family, community and society to eliminate it; build popular pressure on the state to implement gender-equal laws and policies; and bring together diverse local, national, regional and international effort working to combat VAW
- The WE CAN campaign will contribute to this process. Its primary aim will be to convince ordinary men and women across the region that by working together they can end all VAW'

## **Campaign Goal**

Reduce social acceptance of VAW across six countries of South Asia

## **Campaign Objectives**

Over the next six year in these six countries, the campaign will achieve:

- A fundamental shift in social attitudes and beliefs that support VAW
- A collective and visible stand by different sections of the community against VAW
- A popular movement to end all VAW
- A range of local, national and regional alliances to address VAW

## **Campaign Direction (2004-2005)**

- Campaigns will be launched be launched with specific areas of focus in six countries
- Alliances will be strengthened for all national campaigns to increase outreach
- Common regional actions will be launched to mobilize change makers (people who will actively encourage more positive attitudes and behaviours towards women, within the communities in which they live and work) and raise common regional concerns



### **Campaign Approach**

- The campaign will provide a common platform to various individuals and organisations making effort to empower women facing violence at the local and national levels. It will improve synergy and impact through coordinated and targeted campaigning
- It will also coordinate all these efforts to develop them into a regional campaign
- The national campaigns will respond to the unique social, cultural, political and economic environments and thus have different focus area
- In Bangladesh, Sri Lanka India and Afghanistan, the campaign and Nepal the emphasis will be on honour killing and trafficking of girls and women respectively
- Change makers, individuals who will help alter existing gender-biased attitudes and behaviour within the communities they live in, will be an integral part of the campaign
- They will spread the message that VAW is unacceptable and equal relationships violence free

### **Campaign Audience**

The campaign will influence:

- Ordinary men and women to take a stand against VAW, stop and prevent violent behaviour and influence their peers to do the same
- Young people to break the silence that surrounds VAW, take a stand against it, adopt gender-equal values in their own lives (thus, avoid becoming involved in violent relationships themselves ) and influence their peers to do the same
- Decision-makers in State institutions to urge them to develop and implement policies and programmes to support survivors of violence and bring perpetrators of violence to book

### **Campaign Allies**

The campaign will work with

- Diverse civil society group and other networks who can combat VAW in communities through their projects as they already have a personalised interface with people and are in a position to influence
- Individuals and communities across the region who can make choices that challenge VAW and evolve practices that promote gender-equal and evolve practices that promote gender-equal and violence free relationships
- Universities and educational institutions whose student can become effective change makers and help alter existing gender - biased attitudes and practices
- News and entertainment media who can generate a dialogue on issues of gender inequality and VAW as well as offer alternatives to correct gender inequalities
- Celebrities who can endorse and gain mass support for the campaign
- Change makers will spread the message that VAW is unacceptable and equal relationships are violence free

### **Campaign Identity**

- While national campaigns will have their own communication strategies, a unique identity for the region after consultations with allies from each country
- A graphic logo and a strap-lion have been agreed to for the region. Alliances will be urged to make use of them in their events and communication material
- Materials are also being developed for the communication of the campaign message in the region



- Wider dissemination of the campaign and public involvement will also happen through online promotion of the use of campaign logo and banner on other websites; sending of campaign e-cards and downloadable screensavers and bookmakers with the message of the campaign

## Campaign Activities

### 1. National campaign activities

- Country launches in six countries will provide a public to the campaign with the message that ending VAW is both necessary and possible
- Widespread actions through change maker and network will influence individual and community
- Widespread actions through change makes **networks** will influence individual and community attitudes through repeated and sustained messaging
- A series of highly visible, coordinated community mobilisation actions will engage specific target groups in the community to reflect on the issue of VAW and take action to prevent and combat
- Communication of campaign message through mass media and a variety other innovative means of communication will challenge existing notions and present positive alternative, ideas and practices
- Celebrity endorsements of messages to end VAW will promote alternative values and behaviour

### 2. Regional campaign activities

- In March 2005, a common region-wide action plan will be launched to sign up five million change agents to work toward the objectives of the campaign over a six-year period
- Annual regional event from November 2005 will firm up regional identity; one country will host the event each year and it will culminate in a pan-regional event in 2011
- Programmes to mobilize five million change agents will continue over six year across the region and influence 50 million people to take a stand against VAW
- Highly visible mass media communication methods will aid in mobilizing change makers, spread the message and launch solidarity mass actions against VAW
- Regional seminars and workshops on VAW will highlight the common crisis of the region
- Cross-country exchange programmes (exchange visits and educational tours) will facilitate learning from each others' experiences and strengthen the regional identity of the campaign
- Links will be established with national and regional organisations working on gender equality and policy reforms on VAW to influence positive legislative change

## Campaign Development

### Alliance building

Alliance building is critical to sustain the campaign. The core alliance of organisations, with which Oxfam has a long-standing relationship, will gradually expand to include many more like-minded NGOs, State departments, bilateral agencies, corporate organisations, student bodies, trade unions and even individuals.

The alliances formed and initially supported by Oxfam in each country will acquire their own identity as they grow and the campaign gains momentum. These alliances will be both long-term and short-term (to achieve specific objectives). A regional alliance will be developed by bringing together representatives of the national alliances in the first half of 2005.



### **The Key functions of the alliances:**

- Guide the design of the campaign
- Effectively reach the message to target audiences by ensuring high visibility and wide reach of the campaign
- Influence the public and decision-makers to alter current social attitudes and laws
- Strengthen and broaden existing networks working against VAW
- Ensure the campaign benefits from the programmes and research experience others

### **Some rules to guide alliances:**

- All allies must share a commitment to the campaign objectives and work towards them
- Alliances members should be clear what value each ally brings to the campaign
- In order to achieve the campaign objectives, the campaign objectives, the core alliance may have to cooperate with allies by supporting positions, activities, or tactics that it would not fully support alone just as allies may in turn agree to support positions, activities or tactics they would not necessarily support alone
- Some of the questions all core allies should consider while bringing in new alliance members include: what work is the agency doing on VAW; what is its position on the campaign issue; how is its constituency affected by VAW; what might it gain by joining the campaign; what will it expect of other allies; and what resources and value might it bring to the table



# Building Community Strength to address barriers to health and well being

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## 1. Introduction

This paper describes a community project in a poor rural community in south India. It will describe some of the strength based processes and some outcomes to date.

The project is a three year project in one Panchayat. We have used Appreciative Inquiry as a means to practice a strength based approach to enable local people to achieve development goals, where those goals have been identified and defined by them.

The project is named "Healthy Districts Project" and is based on the World Health Organization's Healthy Settings approach. However, our starting point is a local community rather than a District. This is a deliberate strategy because we believe that in order to maximise genuine participation that includes decision making ability, we must start at the grass roots level, where people identify with their local community and can play social citizenship roles through participation. We believe that beginning at a District-wide level runs too much of a danger of a top-down approach and perpetuating the power relations that deny the strengths and resources local people have to transform their lives and their relationships with wider structures.

Recently in the project, exclusionary practices by people from the backward castes towards dalit people became evident. This is contrary to the principles of human rights and social justice that underpin the project. The paper explores the ways in which the Project team is responding to and struggling with these issues of exclusion while still trying to maintain a strength based perspective.

## 2. The Healthy Districts Project – an overview and the setting

This Healthy Districts Research Project is an action research/development project which works within the principles of the World Health Organization's Healthy Settings and Healthy Districts approach (the latter formulated in 2001). However, it is distinguished by its additional principle of adopting a clear 'bottom up' approach to its development work.

The project aims to encourage the development of the Alanganeri Panchayat, in the KV Kuppam Block, Vellore District, Tamil Nadu. The project is being carried out within the World Health Organisation Healthy Districts approach, using community development and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology (Ashford and Patkar 2001). The project commenced in July 2005 with a project planning phase, began implementation in February 2006 and will extend to December 2008 (final report).

The project is a collaborative one amongst three core partners in Australia and India – the School of Social Work and Social Policy University of South Australia, Department of Social Work, Madras Christian College and the Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs (RUHSA). The project is funded by the Myer Foundation, Melbourne, Australia.

The project aims are to develop and evaluate the social health outcomes of a World Health Organisation Pilot Healthy District project, and in particular –



To ascertain the effect of health and development interventions on the health status of local rural communities in the KV Kuppam Block of Vellore District, Tamil Nadu, namely community development/community-based strategies utilising Appreciative Inquiry.

To develop and evaluate community-based interventions for application in rural communities. These interventions involve:

- (1) the development of a partnership (as a major means of community participation) between community members and researchers;
- (2) within which issues of importance to the communities are jointly identified;
- (3) strategies to address the issues agreed upon and
- (4) the outcomes of these strategies measured/evaluated in terms of extent of achievement of relevant goals.

To strengthen the capacity of local communities to promote and maintain health through:

- (1) the establishment of community structures, such as women's self help groups, health committees, youth groups, and any other structures appropriate to issues identified; and
- (2) which are substantially led, organised and maintained by local community members;
- (3) who together hold appropriate and sufficient skills (eg meeting skills, advocacy skills, organisational skills...) to ensure the structures are durable over time.

The main phases and associated methodologies of the overall Project, as a **research** project are:

Research planning and ethics approval by the University of South Australia Human Research Ethics Committee and the Christian Medical College Ethics Committee.

Selection of control and intervention Panchayats.

Planning and administration of baseline survey in Panchayats and data entry and analysis.

Community development processes within the intervention Panchayat.

Administration of post testing in control and intervention Panchayats.

Final report.

Diagrammatically, the timeline and methodologies are as follows:

July 2005 to Mar 2006	Research Planning and Ethics Approval	
	KV Kuppam Block, Vellore District	
March 2006	Comparison Case (Panchayat )	Intervention Case (Alanganeri Panchayat )
March to June 2006	Baseline data, pre test in both Panchayats	
	SURVEY BY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	
April 2006 to September 2008	No intervention beyond existing services	Economic and social development PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH
Oct to November 2008	Post test SURVEY BY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	
December 2008	Final report	



In terms of this paper, the **shaded area** of the above diagram refers to that part of the Project which encompasses a strength based perspective. This is the most important phase of the Project, covering the majority of the time but also being the focus of change efforts and community goal achievement.

The KV Kuppam Block is situated 130 kilometres from Chennai, 27 kilometres west of the town of Vellore and 12 kilometres east of Guddiyatam. The KV Kuppam Block has 39 Panchayats, in which each has their own main village, harijan (dalit, outcaste) colonies, hamlets and scattered field huts. RUHSA covers the entire Block in terms of health care, weekly mobile health care clinics, health education programs, social welfare schemes and social and economic development activities. Statistics show that of the 130,000 population, 75% live below the official poverty line and almost one-third belong to scheduled castes.

The Alanganeri Panchayat comprises a main village, hamlets, field huts and two colonies. The colonies are inhabited by Dalits, or outcastes. This Panchayat was chosen because it remains the most undeveloped Panchayat in the Block and continues to record the lowest health status indicators.

The Panchayat has two separate dalit colonies which generally have less basic amenities (such as toilets), and the people live in greater poverty, are relegated to the most menial tasks and, being largely landless, are economically dependent on caste people for income. Income security and food security are generally less than for caste people, with many Dalits relying on coolie work, daily work in fields and other areas. This work is both seasonal and unreliable. Payment can be in grain rather than in cash. There is a history of discrimination against Dalits.

Alanganeri Panchayat consists of most backward castes (MBCs) and scheduled castes (dalits – SCs). 90% of people are of the Vanniyar caste, which is an MBC. There are 7 women's self help groups in the Panchayat. Each of these groups has the maximum number of 20 members, so there are 140 women who are members of self help groups. None of these groups has income generation programs in place. In terms of religion, 99% of the Panchayat population is Hindu and about 1% Christian. There are no Muslims in the Panchayat.

### 3. The Healthy Districts Project – progress to date

To date (six months into the three-year implementation stage), the outcomes of the Healthy Districts include:

The commencement of a tailoring unit, comprising 50 women from eight of the ten communities in the Alanganeri Panchayat. The Unit, named *Tamil Thendrel* (meaning Tamil Breeze), has ten women from the dalit colonies amongst its members and the tailoring teacher is also from one of the dalit colonies.

The tailoring unit has secured eight sewing machines from RUHSA and a rental building in which to hold classes from Monday to Saturday in morning and evening batches.

Contacts have been established with possible retail outlets in Australia with a view to the Unit becoming an export production unit.

Support has been offered by a close by export tailoring unit and a local weavers' cooperative has agreed to supply cloth.

Agreement in principle from the Panchayat Council for assistance in obtaining land, and for State government and Christian Medical College assistance in providing building materials for a permanent Project office in the Panchayat and a tailoring unit building.

Organisation of the group into a society, with office bearers and bank account.

Commencement of skill training for the Tamil Tendril group in areas such as collaborative decision making, conflict resolution, roles and responsibilities of group member, making linkages with outside organisations, finance and accounts.

The establishment of a Panchayat-wide Healthy Districts Community Committee, comprising six Panchayat council members and two representatives from each of the ten communities in the Panchayat.



Commencement of skill training of the Healthy Districts Community Committee to enable it to govern and manage the Healthy Districts Project in the medium and long term.

In terms of the project objectives, the early achievements to date are indicative of progress towards capacity building and generally represent the use of effective strategies to this end. Later in this paper we will report on the issue of exclusion which has arisen and our responses to, and reflections on, this issue.

#### 4. Theory and methodology supporting a strength based approach

##### 4.1 Main Strength based tenets relevant to the Healthy Districts Project

The project is firmly founded in the principles of a strength based perspective with its primary role of enabling local people to understand their individual and collective strengths and resources, and then to harness them for ongoing development of self and community.

"The strength based perspective consciously creates a new agenda for practice. It draws attention away from increasingly technique-laden approaches to human situations and reminds us of a simple truth: that each person already carries the seeds for his or her own transformation. A steadfast belief in that potential is one of the most powerful gifts a social worker can offer"

(Weik, 1992, p25)

The project takes its direction from peoples' narratives and relates to those in the community as people who know something, have learned from their experiences, have ideas, have energy and can do some things well.

The project is based on the belief that change towards greater autonomy happens best when it is founded on a person's or community's capacity. The worker role of collaborator and consultant will enable change through utilising strengths. These roles help avoid 'blaming the victim', which dangerously ignores environmental factors/determinants and the person's strengths to have survived in oppressive circumstances. An appreciation of this and exploration of this is the starting point for work from the strength based perspective.

There are some key concepts of strength based practice which are particularly relevant to the Healthy Districts Project. **Empowerment** is central to our work, where participation is encouraged and those who are more silent and marginalised are given opportunities to gain a voice in processes of change. Closely tied to this is the notion of **membership** which involves making links for those who are alienated, those with little or less sense of belonging in a community. The Healthy Districts Project does not bring substantial money with it and so it relies on a belief that, in the communities, resources are renewable and generative, not scarce; the environment is a helping resource.

**Dialogue and collaboration** are important components because it is through these reciprocal processes that people can discover and test their own powers.

##### 4.2 Social Determinants of Health

The perspective of the social determinants of health is one that emanates from the work of the World Health Organisation. This perspective on health, one amongst many views (Hancock and Perkins 1985), avoids an approach which 'blames the victim' for ill-health. Rather, this perspective analyses the structural conditions in which people live and the oppression and exploitation that prevent people from living healthily as individuals and communities.

The World Health Organisation states that health:

"is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity and also the ability to lead an economically productive life, is a fundamental human right and that the attainment of the highest possible level of health is a most important world-wide social goal whose realisation requires the action of many other social and economic sectors in addition to the health sector"

(World Health Organisation as cited in Park (2005) )

The Alma Ata Declaration clearly stated



“that the existing gross inequality of health status amongst populations within and between countries is politically, socially and economically unacceptable and is a common global concern that people have the right to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their health care that governments have the responsibility for the health of their people which can only be fulfilled by the provision of adequate health and social measures.”  
(World Health Organisation, as cited in Park 2005)

For the individual, health, within this perspective, is closely aligned with strengths, the capacity to achieve one's potential and to respond positively to the challenges of the environment; health is a resource for everyday living. The difference in health status amongst populations is a social justice issue. People's participation in health is a right and health itself is a human right. Consequently, health work must involve addressing social injustice, inequities, lack of access to resources, barriers to participation and the violation of human rights. Conversely, health work is social justice promoting, enabling participation and building cultures of hope, strength and achievement in communities.

It is clear, then, that a view of health as being determined by structural determinants (Baum 2006; Labonte 1992) is congruent with a strength based perspective because it assumes capacity in people and communities. Appreciative Inquiry, as a methodology in community work, is congruent with this theoretical approach and with a strength based perspective because it assumes strengths in a community and identifies strengths as the basic resources for change.

#### 4.3 Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is an important methodology being used in the Project's community development work. It is a change strategy which is consistent with a strength based perspective and the social view of health. Appreciative Inquiry is fully participatory and it focuses on the conditions and environments in which people live. It works from the strengths and resources which exist within people and their communities. It purposefully uses these strengths as the resources for creating positive changes. Appreciative Inquiry, however, does not create new resources and must always be seen in the context of a larger and wider development process.

Appreciative Inquiry is depicted as a four stage process which moves in cycles. The four stages are **Discovery, Dreaming, Design and Delivery**.

In the **Discovery stage**, people in groups and communities are encouraged to identify their strengths and the factors which have enabled past achievements. The Dreaming state enables people to envision the future they would like, to identify the ways in which their community would be most supportive of its members and the roles they and their local groups or organisations could play in creating such positive changes. In the Delivery stage people devise particular strategies and action plans to achieve their goals. The Delivery stage involves the implementation of the action plans.

In the Discovery stage, people in groups and communities are encouraged to identify their strengths and the factors which have enabled past achievements. The Dreaming state enables people to envision the future they would like, to identify the ways in which their community would be most supportive of its members and the roles they and their local groups or organisations could play in creating such positive changes.

“The Discovery Stage of AI is a defining feature of the methodology. Good Discovery exercises create an opportunity for sharing stories that recognise individual merit and mutual strengths. This builds the bonds that are necessary for individuals to invest their efforts in collective action for extended periods.

The opening questions of the inquiry can generate remarkable energy and valuable information. The questions that we ask set the stage for what we ‘find’, and what we discover (the data) becomes the stories out of which the future is conceived, conversed about and constructed. As such, selecting the focus of the inquiry and generating appropriate questions takes on particular significance.”  
(Ashford and Patkar 2001)

The **Dream stage** builds on the community strengths to envision a better community. The visions are likely to be wide in their scope, taking in social relationships, economic relationships, cultural traditions, the natural and human-made environment, governance structures in the community, income generation and money-earning visions and social infrastructure.



"The group's vision of the future will represent a compelling possibility because it will be built on the community resources – its strengths as they have emerged from the analysis of past achievements." (Ashford and Patkar 2001)

The central feature of the Design Stage is dialogue through which community members devise ways of realising their dreams, of building and strengthening capacity, participation, social relations, governance structures and leadership in the community. Devising strategies includes identifying roles and responsibilities. It also includes building new relationships with external organisations and mobilising necessary resources.

The **Design stage** yields an action plan, which includes planning for short and long term objectives and for structural changes that may transform conditions in which people live.

In the **Delivery Stage**, the action plans are implemented. Resources are mobilised, new relationships with external organisations are formed, new skills are developed in members and there is much collective action towards the collective vision.

Appreciative Inquiry has a resounding theme of strengths. It identifies, uses, builds on and extends strengths within individuals, groups and communities.

#### 4.4 Applying theory and methodology to focus on strengths.

As stated earlier, the importance of a social and structural view of health to strength based practice is that it avoids 'blaming the victim' and labelling people as deficient. Rather than people being 'at risk' people, they are seen to be in 'at risk environments'.

Appreciative Inquiry complements this view at the implementation level. The Project team commenced AI in one particular village in the Panchayat, based on advice that we should start with a group that had some history of achievements. During the AI process we conducted formal sessions with the SHG members and other villagers, as well as some informal games sessions with the children.

As an icebreaker, and to get to know the participants, we started the first session with a PRA exercise, the village mapping, using chalks and drawing on the cement ground of the compound.

This exercise was very effective because it was physically, rather than verbally focused, and so facilitated participation from several shy people.

We discussed together the village map and, according to AI process, linked the session on story telling about their village, asking what they liked about it. This exercise started the process of discovering their strengths and factors that enabled their achievements, a process which continued along several sessions. During these sessions:

They told us "how they liked their village, it was a nice place to live, with fresh air, fresh water every day; they had fresh vegetables, fresh fruits, how it was healthy to live here, no pollution, they had good coconut and papaya trees; there was a very good atmosphere in the village, everyone knew each other, they were all somehow related, very calm, no disturbance, no fighting, there was a good community spirit".

They explained to us the process of their SHG and how it functioned, its rules, norms, "to be eligible women had to have completed 8<sup>th</sup> standard, if not, they were 'uncivilised'; 'uncivilised' women were not accepted because they were unable to sign their name, they were unable to cooperate or understand sufficiently, and low cooperation would lead to group problems; however, they had one 'uncivilised' member but she could cooperate; so they agreed, it also depends of the nature of the person; most can understand but some not; people need to be able to understand because just one member not cooperating meant the whole group would collapse. One person in the group had achieved +2 and this was the animator who collected and banked the money, and went to important meetings to represent their SHG". They said "not to discuss personal matters and issues in meetings". They explained how "RUHSA had helped to buy cows for members and had taught them methods of earning money and earning a living. RUHSA had provided training and their SHG helped coach others to earn a living".

The women spoke about "generation differences that increased with education. The children nowadays would almost all go to school; This was a change in their lives; education was important; traditionally women had been kept down and not allowed to get education; times were changing for women and they were coming forward to seek their own freedom, and this had been because of education".



S. said "that what they learnt through their education this they could pass on to their children; it was very important to educate the children; they feel very happy when the children study; and as they teach the children, the women also learn".

C. said "that she had to stop to study as she got married and regretted it. She would have loved to continue to study".

They said "that as they moved out from houses to be educated, they had been able to experience and discover the outside world; they could now talk to banks and at school meetings; they had greater confidence in facing the world; they felt happy and really comfortable now; they felt they could much better manage all aspects of the family – money, problem solving, taking on greater responsibility".

M., an elderly woman, said "that she was uneducated and how hard it was for her to raise her children as a single mother. Her husband went away and she was alone to overcome all the difficulties of life". She said "she was very happy knowing that her children would benefit from education. This had helped her to endure hardship. She was happy now, she had done it alone and met aspirations for her children".

While they told us they wanted a road (dreaming), we asked them to tell us about something similar they had achieved in their village (discovery). They said "*we had water problems, no easy access to water in the village, women had to carry water from a well about one kilometre away and this was difficult for them; but this problem had been solved, the SHG had done a lot; the members of the SHG got together and met with the Panchayat leader; there were difficulties and opposition but they worked together and crossed the hurdles; the leader heard them out, listened and the problem was solved eventually; they were not hasty; they were polite and calm. They had water taps in the village now*".

At the next meeting, we highlighted the strengths we found from their stories and shared them with the participants to ensure they resonated with them, which they did:

- Patience
- Building good relationships with those in power
- Ability to make changes in the village
- Confidence
- Ability to take on great responsibility
- Skilled managers
- Skilled decision makers
- Independent
- Strong together in the SHG
- Strength to sacrifice for children
- Enduring Hardship
- The women are pioneers for the generations to come

Some weeks later we discovered new strengths and we discussed these new discovered strengths with the participants:

- Awareness of positive aspects of their environment and the village
- Feelings of happiness within their environment, the village
- Awareness of sense of living 'healthy' through fresh food
- Good community spirit and harmony
- Awareness of women's situation in India
- Awareness of member's rights as women in India, in the world
- Awareness of changes in Indian society
- Awareness of pressure from society's taboos
- Awareness of importance and impact of education
- Desire to learn
- Desire to be leaders of their own changes
- Determined

They concurred with these strengths and themes. During this session, we related all these strengths back to the stories and to the themes that emerged from them. The strengths were written in English and Tamil languages in two



large white cardboard sheets. After having asked the group about their thoughts and if they agreed about these strengths, one of them said *"We were not aware of these until you told us, but now we can see how we can come up in life"*. The women nodded and smiled in agreement.

While still in the process of discovery, the women already told us about one of their dreams; they said "they wanted a road, transport to the main road was a problem; they had gone to the Panchayat president but land owners were not willing to give some part of their fields for the building of the road. They needed this road to allow school buses to come and to give them options about which schools they sent their children to; children could go to better schools and have better future. This would be easier for everything and everyone". One woman said, "with the road many changes will occur".

And while the women were articulating this dream, another dream emerged; they said *"they wanted their children speaking fluent English"*.

In the next session, to introduce the dreaming phase, we asked them to close their eyes and visualise their village how they would like to have it in five years' time. After this, they were each given white flip chart paper that was divided into two parts. They were asked to draw what they had visualised on one half of the paper. Children also participated to the exercise.

This exercise drew to light following dreams (in no particular order):

- To build a house next to the main road
- A road between the village and the main road
- A water tank
- A hospital
- A village shopping centre
- A higher secondary school (local school only until 10th standard)
- Maintaining the village's natural beauty
- Start own school (one member)
- Comfortable houses
- Well furnished houses
- More comfortable village (linked to road, water tank, shops...)
- Computer
- University
- Improving children's education (linked to road and computer)
- Own car (one member)
- Employment for people who had got education'
- A village Tailoring unit – generating income collectively drawing on their present skills, which included bag making, tailoring, garments making. They dreamed of building to an export quality.
- Fluent English for their children

They said "as each individual improved their selves, the village as a whole also improved. Proper earning would lead to improvement for individuals and the whole village".

During the subsequent session, to further progress their dreaming, we did the exercise of prioritising their dreams, all written on cards placed on the ground, and identified through five different factors:

- The **most important** dream to achieve
- The dream the **most difficult** to achieve
- The dream the **most easy** to achieve
- The dream taking the **longest time** to achieve
- The dream taking the **shortest time** to achieve

Each participant was handed three stones, from large to small, to place on three chosen cards. We noted each person's vote and, afterwards, worked on the results' tabulation to take back to the next session.

During that next session, when asked to identify from 'the most important' chart which two dreams they would like to work on, they spontaneously voted by raising their hands. The collective tailoring unit received the most votes, followed by the water tank with three votes.



While discussing the importance of group cohesion, participation and commitment, they said “they would cooperate on the tailoring unit issue when having voted for the water tank and cooperate on the water tank issue when having voted for the tailoring unit. They wanted a tailoring unit, small in scale was enough for them”. Eleven women raised their hand when asked how many of them would want to work in the tailoring unit, and among them were the three women who had voted for the water tank. Two adolescents present in the meeting also raised their hand.

And then they said they “did not have much experience in business and did not know how to know what there was a demand for on the market; they needed to learn to understand this”. We said we knew about a successful tailoring unit in the area and asked who would be interested to visit this place, “we surely want to go, all of us” was the reply.

We said that as others have succeeded, it was also possible for them to succeed, that we could learn from other projects and find out details, about markets, what to produce and so on. Then one of them asked “*how do we get orders?*”; It would be through questions like this to those we visit who have been successful, that we would find answers, we said.

Then someone was nominated to gather and write down the questions from the members to ask during their visit to the successful tailoring unit. They said they “*would prepare a list of interested people as well as a list of questions for the tailoring unit visit for the next session*”.

The interpreter translated into English the eleven questions prepared by the women:

The need for a location for the unit:

Obtaining legal permissions – which departments have to be approached

How many people and machines will be needed?

What is the production capacity of each tailoring machine?

What is the minimum and maximum output per person per day for the unit to operate successfully?

What is the amount of capital needed to start the unit? Profit and production to be discussed?

Where can we obtain the capital needed for unit?

What are the issues about time management and working hours of the unit that we need to know?

What should be the daily income of each person in this project?

What do we need to know about marketing products?

How should the unit be run? who will manage the unit? – will it be a committee, will a person be appointed to manage?

The visions of a tailoring unit and learning spoken English (for adults and children) were clear and absolute in terms of ownership by the participants. Actions to be undertaken in the design stage were clear as was the entire ownership of these by the participants: getting the land, building the tailoring unit, organising further training, and getting sewing machines. These action plans addressed and involved a complex array of systems/skills/structures, such as defining member roles, developing relationships, creating partnerships, expanding capacity building, increasing social and financial resources, implementing documentation and creating a financial base, and other management systems.

## 5. Dealing with exclusion – strength based practice meets Indian caste system



### The issue

At the time discussions started in the village about establishing the group as a more formal tailoring unit, the Project team members were approached by a non SHG member who was upset because information about meetings and other matters was being withheld from her and other women. At the same time, the SHG leader and one other woman approached us by making a special visit to RUHSA campus to tell us that other women in the project were "bad" and they should not be given any positions of responsibility and that we should not interact socially with them. These women were the ones referred to in the earlier meetings as "uncivilised". These "uncivilised" women were participating in the AI process towards realising a dream.

We were aware that, one year earlier, the local polytechnic had run a government-funded community-based sewing program in the Panchayat and that the classes had been divided into those for the SC people and those for other castes. We were also very clear that the Healthy Districts Project would provide opportunities for all members of the Panchayat to be involved in ways that encouraged dialogue, not separation.

We tried several discrete strategies to combat the influence of these exclusionary practices and deeply ingrained forces in a caste-based community. We unmistakably reiterated the principles of the Project. We clearly told the women that the Healthy Districts Project was to include everyone and that this meant that women who had previously chosen not to be in the SHG and SC people would be part of the tailoring unit if they so chose. This was met with a repeated message that these were "bad" people. As westerners, we were somewhat perplexed by this as we had observed the women interacting amicably on many occasions, their children playing together and at times, entering each others' homes. We used local staff to ensure people understood the project. A senior RUHSA staff member and the Rural Community Officer attended the next community meeting and clearly informed the people that the project was not a SHG project. They told the meeting that RUHSA ran many programs apart from the SHG program and this was a program different from the SHGs, therefore, Healthy Districts would include people from the entire Panchayat. This did not deter the SHG leader from her position, although she did not apparently engage in any obvious blocking tactics for some time.

One young woman from one of the dalit colonies, in one of the early meetings, told the group that she had completed courses in embroidery and at the next meeting, with the support of team members, she brought with her samples of her work. This woman continued to attend the meetings, completed an application form and encouraged other young women from her colony to join. This has resulted in 10 out of the 50 participating women coming from the two dalit colonies. This young woman with embroidery skills is also demonstrating good leadership skills in the classes and is quietly and confidently assisting other members, and other women are consulting her, along with the teacher, during the classes.

The Project team had much difficulty in securing a tailoring teacher. The local community worker seemed to give inconsistent messages about there being many qualified people locally to there being none. After increasing pressure on him to secure a teacher, one was finally found. To our astonishment, the woman was local to the Panchayat and from one of the dalit colonies! We met her, invited her to the next meeting and she met with the women. We discerned looks of reservation and reluctance on the faces of some of the women. The teacher brought out her certificates and samples of her work. She handed them to the Project team members who nodded in approval and the certificates were circulated by the women amongst all of them. By the end of the meeting there were warm exchanges and the teacher spoke in a confident voice to the women. It was agreed that she would teach, six days a week, for six months.

Subsequently, on several occasions, the community worker, from a forward caste, told us that there were problems. Firstly we were told the teacher was not competent. Then we were told her husband would not allow her to teach. On each occasion, these reasons appeared to dissolve as we asked probing questions, met with her and her husband, and so on. Eventually classes began and the teacher is well settled.

At the election of the office bearers of the tailoring unit group, the woman who was the main target of exclusion nominated for President and Vice President. At her nomination of President, the SHG leader's ally also nominated and won the election. A second woman also nominated for Vice President and won the election. The position of secretary was uncontested and so the woman who was subject to exclusion won the position of secretary. At the tailoring unit the following day, at the inauguration ceremony, the secretary told us that she did not want to continue. This was concerning because she had consistently demonstrated initiative, responsibility, encouragement to others and we viewed her and these strengths as an important asset to the project. So, at the inauguration of the *Tamil Thendrel* Tailoring Unit, the Project team members proposed that there be two Vice Presidents and that the two nominations of the day before be accepted. We used this tactic to attempt to keep the skilled but being-excluded



woman from leaving the project, in a way that was most face saving for all. She had agreed to the tactic before it was mooted in the meeting. We thought our plan had been translated accurately to the meeting by the local health worker, people nodded in agreement and then one other young woman stood up and we were told she was the new Vice President! Our tactic has backfired in the most dramatic way possible. We then gave emotional support to the secretary and she told us that the new Vice President would be married in the next year, would have to leave the Panchayat and she was, therefore, happy to stay as secretary till then and to await the girl's departure. This incident had been resolved, but more by good fortune than good management.

While we seemed to be able to maintain involvement of the dalit women and to successfully resolve particular incidents, the underlying issue of power and exclusion being exerted by the SHG leader and a few other women persisted. We reflected on this and it seemed as though we could win battles but the war continued, caste and other divisions remained intact. We thus decided to seek a more structural solution to the issue of exclusion within the communities. We were not under the illusion that we could replace the current exclusionary structures, but we wanted to build a viable alternative, even if it sat beside the old ones for some considerable time to come.

The Project felt like a real struggle for all Project team members. Our struggle was concerned with maintaining a strength perspective in the face of a seeming onslaught of exclusionary practices within the community. It sometimes became difficult to appreciate the community in a positive way. We were becoming deficit-focused, so we deliberately turned our attention and our discussions to the alternative question "What are the strengths in this community?" and our vision immediately broadened beyond a few individuals to the whole community. There were people who were involved in other civic activities, including women's self help groups and the Panchayat Council. We firmly believed that collective power worked for the good of a community as well as in other ways. We were increasingly convinced that our short term tactics for each discrete incident was not an adequate solution; that a more durable solution must lay in our facilitative and consultant roles, through partnership with the Panchayat people in building a community based structure, owned by them, which could address issues competently and capably. We had somehow fallen into the trap of providing the solutions and so by default, assuming a deficient community. We needed to realign our perspective towards a reinvigorated believing in the indigenous ability of the community and walking alongside it to build structures based on its strengths.

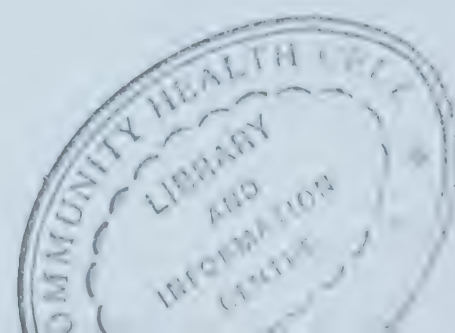
We went back to talk with the groups we were working with. We contextualised the tailoring unit as one, but only the first of many projects that the Healthy Districts Project would initiate. That the tailoring unit originated in one village did not mean that it belonged to that village. Anyone from the Panchayat could participate. But the Project Team would be involved only for three years and the project would need to continue after that, totally in the hands of the community. So, we proposed that we establish a Panchayat-wide Healthy Districts Community Committee. Our rationale for this was that it would be representative of all communities across the Panchayat, including the two dalit colonies. If it were assisted to develop the skills to manage and govern the project in ways consistent with the values and objectives of the Project, then this would be an effective alternative mechanism within the communities, and one which may be able to deal with exclusion issues into the future. We considered our assistance as providing training in such areas as collaborative decision making, conflict resolution, and so on. This committee would consist of Panchayat Council representatives and two nominees from each village, hamlet and colony, one woman and one man. We would visit each community, explain the Project, the role of the Committee and the roles of its members. We would then ask each community to select its two nominees.

To date we have established the committee. We are undertaking Appreciative Inquiry with the Committee and commencing a training program which is similar to those used with women's self help groups, in capacity building and group and project organisation skills.

#### Strengths and Caste/membership

The divisions in the Alanganeri community have important implications for strength based practice. For the Project team, the divisions and fractures initially represented threats to the Project. We appreciated the exclusion issues arising within the community as indicative of deeply embedded divisions. We therefore concentrated on ameliorating the situations that presented. On each occasion we devised tactics to counteract the divisive processes. In so doing, we inadvertently and insidiously fell into a deficit framework. We discarded our belief in the community's strengths and internal resources and sought to redress weaknesses, as we saw them. Our tactics did not work beyond immediate band aiding.

When we stood back, reflected and took a community-wide view and reminded ourselves of strength based practice, we began to reframe the divisions as diversity. In a community which had had separatist programs in the past, we had dalit and caste people joining together and, indeed, a dalit woman as teacher. Where many self help groups had





excluded non members, we had the privilege of non members participating. Not only were they participating, but they were developing leadership roles. They were taking initiative, they were taking on responsibilities and they were influencing the directions of the tailoring project.

Reframing divisions as diversity unearthed for us many more sources of rich diversity in the community and the Project. We had young and old; we had literate and illiterate; we had an individual who was both a health worker and a member of a caste. Diversity, we realised, brought new and more perspectives to the processes. People from diverse backgrounds, working together, even with understandable tensions, represented a new dimension of dialogue, of listening and being together, rather than retreating into corners of the Panchayat and each holding tight to their own 'truth'. We then moved to 'institutionalise' or formalise this resource by establishing the Community committee where the diversity was represented on a body that will become the decision making body of the project.

The strengths perspective was crucial in our work with exclusion because it enabled the Project team to reframe deficiencies (divisions) as community strengths and resources (diversity; and with diversity coming together, dialogue; and with dialogue, richer processes and outcomes). The perspective proved to be more powerful an influence on our practice than the caste and membership issues confronting us. Conversely, when we realigned ourselves with a strength based approach, it was crucial in developing structures that would embrace the diversity, which is in stark contrast to trying to remedy divisiveness.

### 6. Summarising the Project resources – community strengths

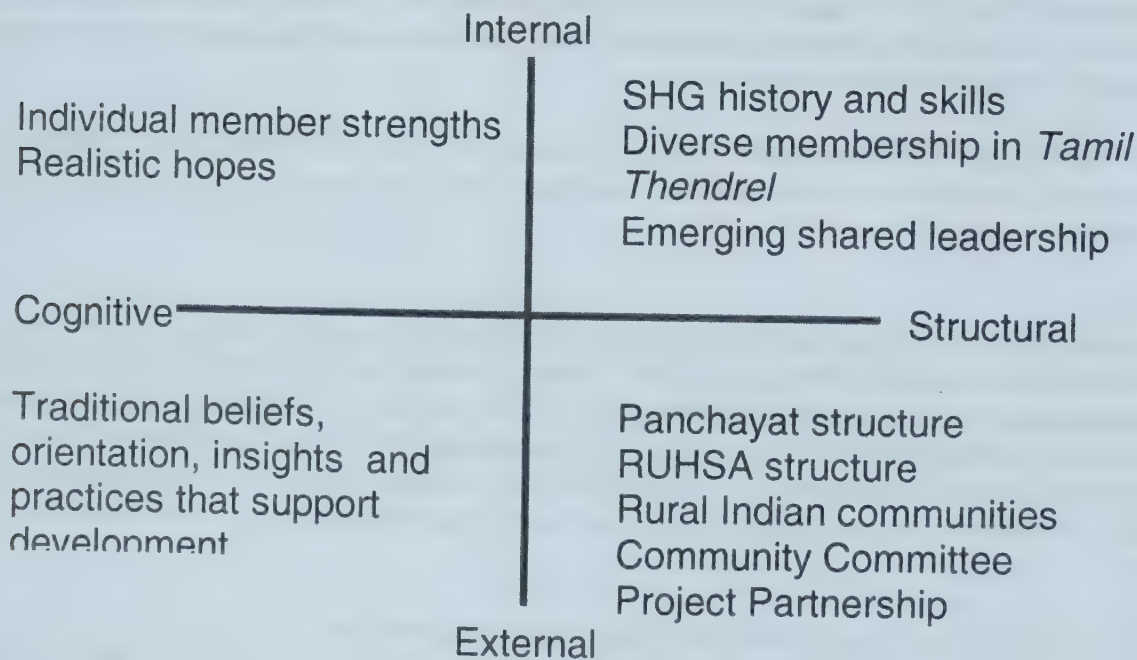
To date, the Project has identified, drawn on, utilised and enhanced community resources and strengths. These can be conceptualised as:

**Cognitive strengths:** all those strengths that individuals narrated in their past achievements, such as perseverance, organising skills; the ability of the people to build hope realistically on past achievements and current resources; and so on.

**Structural strengths:** Those supportive aspects of the Panchayat structure; the community-based structures of RUHSA; the supportive aspects of rural Indian communities; and so on.

**Internal (to the group) strengths:** the history of the SHG and the skills it has accumulated through its training and activities; the inclusion of diverse background people into the *Tamil Thendrel* group; the emerging leadership skills within the group that fracture caste lines; and so on.

**External (to the group) strengths:** the Community Committee; the development and maintenance of a learning environment created by such partners as Madras Christian College and their students in dialogue with the University of South Australia social work students.





## 7. Learnings and Conclusion

There are many lessons being learned with the Alanganeri community being powerful teachers. The power of community development and the partnership model of working with communities has been strongly reinforced. Having a genuine belief in, and a commitment to identifying, working with and sharing discoveries of strengths in a community is central to development work. A belief in and commitment to a strength based approach is equally potent in a community which is poor, relatively underdeveloped with relatively poorer health status than other communities. The ease at which barriers to development work can seduce one into a deficit framework is frightening. The strength of a team and the power of reflection in practice as a foil to reverting to what professionals love – deficits – has also been reinforced.

We are developing a more useful and more sophisticated understanding of the meaning of the environment as a helping resource. We have come to understand that this is not a given and simple fact, but it is a developmental process and its fruition must be guided. The helping aspect of the environment has to be nurtured, developed and understood as one aspect of a contradictory phenomenon. In other words, there are alienating forces as well as supportive forces and it is the skill of the workers, the understanding of power as a dynamic force and the processes of building counter structures that will actualise the environment as a maximally helping resource. Belief in strengths does not mean a naive view of community. Rather, it must include a thoughtful and balanced analysis of all dynamics and interests within a community and it must also then include a clear set of strategies to build up supportive features and a set of strategies that challenge the vested interests that use power abusively and exploitatively.

Our Madras Christian College partner emphasised to us the importance of empowerment through dialogue, not separatist action. This has, on a number of important occasions, been reinforced for us. Its principle has guided our building of the community committee. It has guided our delicate work within the *Tamil Thendrel unit*. It has underpinned our encouragement of the young dalit embroiderer and the dalit teacher. We have strengthened our belief that dialogue and collaboration will lead to more durable empowerment of people and groups. As Iris Marion Young (1990) claims, dialogue, which is the different coming together to listen, understand and broaden one's own view of the world, leads to two important things, greater social justice and wiser outcomes. Both of these will contribute to a successful Project. A tailoring unit which is making great profits but has excluded the most marginalised is a failure.

This dialogue and mutual support amongst partners is noteworthy in itself. Harnessing the strengths and resources that are the wisdom within these partners has enriched the Project and the learning. There has been an open and trusting relationship whereby doubts can be expressed, unsolved puzzles shared, bewilderments ventilated and joys and achievements celebrated together. The partnership is modelling effective collaboration but it is also modelling the development of a learning environment (Holt, Love and Heng 2000), where knowledge is not considered a static thing that some possess and others do not. Rather, it is constructed as a developing and ongoing process of generating and regenerating knowledge (Payne 1991) that derives from the reflections (Schon 1995) on practice that occur in the partnership amongst the community and the Project partners. This openness to confronting the unknown with curiosity and excitement is, in itself a strength and a resource on which the Project is relying.

In the end, a moderate project, whether it is tailoring, road building or learning English, but which is inclusive of all, will be a success in view of the objectives of the Healthy Districts Project.

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# Social Work: A perpetual odyssey towards strengths based practice

Pam Trotman

*This paper will retrace, from a reflective viewpoint, a forty year journey through professional and personal challenges as part of ongoing efforts to discover and utilise my strengths as an integral part of social work practice.*

*It will cover terrain in which forces such as internalised dominance threaten to undermine or disrupt my strengths and capacity to reach professional maturity. It will describe the journey inherent to exploring the implications of applying principles of social justice, self determination, uniqueness of the individual, and respect for difference. It will attempt to take readers through the dark, lonely, often terrifying realm of fears and prejudices – country we must travel if we are to break free of those forces to encounter our humanity – the cornerstone of good social work practice. It will chart the trials, challenges and triumphs resulting in confidence in myself as a social work professional, the future, and a sense of belonging to the global struggle to achieve just and equitable societies, as well as being part of the social work profession's contribution to that collective effort.*

*The paper will conclude by describing a vision for the future and the likely challenges facing those people who attempt to achieve that vision.*

*The reader will firstly be taken through the narrative of key influences shaping my thinking and hence responses to social work thought and practice leading to the identification and analysis of my emerging strengths based practice. By its nature, the narrative needs to be told in full before the nuances of its patterns and the main relationships between its characters reveal their full meaning and purpose. By tracing the threads of the narrative, and by exploring their meaning, one begins to gain a sense of the whole story, in therapeutic terms, the uniqueness of the individual. And in telling the story, and hearing it retold, the person gains a vantage point from which to explore and assess individual chapters of life and key events within them - the result being a growing sense of wholeness and connection both inwardly and to the greater world of his or her existence. To avoid disruption to the narrative whilst at the same time acknowledging sources of information I will cite references by use of the numbers thus: [1].*

This narrative begins February 1965. I had passed my high school exams but not well enough to obtain a scholarship to attend university. An offer of a Government sponsored Teacher's College Scholarship was declined as I really wanted to study social work, despite having scant knowledge of the profession. The last two years of my life had been dedicated to matriculating – never again was I to demonstrate such commitment having, in my last year, spent two hours of each day on mathematics; the subject I needed to pass if I was to matriculate. I was a very poor mathematics student and in fact failed all the examinations in those final two years except the one that counted.

With my parent's blessing and financial support I was going to Sydney, some seven hundred kilometres away, to begin studying social work. Such was the extent of my family's conviction and commitment to my future that they dedicated three quarters of the fortnightly income to paying my way. Yet the journey really began a decade beforehand shortly after we had arrived in the rural community in which we were living.

My father, a soil conservationist, had returned to government employment after a failed business venture. We went to live in a prosperous country town. Accommodation was in short supply so initially we lived in a disused farmhouse. To get to the house we had to cross the bridge over the river, a slow meandering river that wended its way across a vast floodplain. As with such rivers there were numerous ox-bow lagoons along its course. One such lagoon, known as billabongs in Australian English, lay just on the other side of the river. It was 'home' to several local Aboriginal families. As a living place, nestled under the giant river gums (eucalypt trees) it was a picturesque setting. Even the humpies, crudely constructed dwellings made of waste materials, appeared to my seven year old eyes to have a certain charm. This 'community' was, in many ways, ideally located as it was close to the town centre and the river provided a nearby source of food, water and firewood.

That scene and the ensuing events marked the birth of my sense of social justice though it was not until I reached university that I found the language to describe what I had experienced. It was born of the question "why do those people have to live there and not in town like the white people?"

Shortly after our arrival there was a huge flood that swept across the country inundating everything for miles. The floodplain became a vast inland sea. The town's emergency services team, of which my father was a member, required all those people living along the river to evacuate. This included the Aboriginal people. I don't know where they went as they were simply told they had to move.

When the flood waters receded people moved back into their homes yet the Aboriginal people were not permitted to return to the billabong. They were allocated a parcel of council land beside the town's garbage dump. The site had no running water or sewerage though I recall some pit toilets were erected and a tanker delivered water. It was 2 miles from the shopping centre, and other facilities. The Aboriginal people soon rebuilt their dwellings, again from materials salvaged from the garbage dump.



By then my parents had obtained land through a post war scheme for soldiers who had fought in WWII. It gave them land on which to build houses. A second scheme which had its origins in post WWI Australia provided 'Soldier Settlers' [1] with farms created by the Federal Government from the purchase of huge pastoral properties which were then sub-divided into farming allotments. The pastoral properties had been established during the days of colonisation in which white settlers simply occupied vast tracts of land across eastern Australia.

As a primary school student I was learning about Australian History which told of the discovery and exploration of Australia, the conquering and taming of this 'Wide Brown Land' as Australia was affectionately known, and the birth of a nation. We also learnt, that one of the first pieces of legislation passed by our Federal Government was the White Australia Policy [2] which, as its name suggests, ensured that Australia would only be settled by white people. That policy was born of a xenophobic determination to prevent the Yellow Hordes (Chinese) from overrunning Australia - a fear arising from the influx of Chinese during the gold rushes some fifty years previously. Nowhere in our constitution were Indigenous people recognised as citizens. Their births and deaths were not formally recorded along with the registration of white citizens. We were told stories of how, in some parts of the country, records of Aboriginal births and deaths were kept as part of livestock records! This remained the case until the results of the 1967 Federal referendum [3] changed the Australian political landscape in two ways – by removing the White Australia Policy and by acknowledging Indigenous people as citizens. That election marked the first time I voted and has remained a seminal moment in my political and social consciousness.

The phrase 'Wide Brown Land' comes from much quoted poem "My Country" by Dorothea MacKellar [4] an early Australian poet, who by coincidence had penned the verse whilst living on one of the pastoral properties just a few miles out of the town where I was growing up. As I sat on the same river bank she had sat on years before I too felt my heart swell with love of this wide brown land.

### **My Country**

*The love of field and coppice,  
Of green and shaded lanes,  
Of ordered woods and gardens  
Is running in your veins.  
Strong love of grey-blue distance,  
Brown streams and soft, dim skies –  
I know but cannot share it,  
My love is otherwise.*

*I love a sunburnt country,  
A land of sweeping plains,  
Of rugged mountain ranges,  
Of droughts and flooding rains.  
I love her far horizons,  
I love her jewel-sea,  
Her beauty and her terror –  
The wide brown land for me!*

*The stark white ring-barked forests,  
All tragic to the moon,  
The sapphire-misted mountains,  
The hot gold hush of noon,  
Green tangle of the brush  
Where lithe lianas coil,  
And orchids deck the tree-tops,  
And ferns the warm dark soil.*

*Core of my heart, my country!  
Her pitiless blue sky,  
When, sick at heart, around us  
We see the cattle die –  
But then the grey clouds gather,*



*And we can bless again  
The drumming of an army,  
The steady soaking rain.*

*Core of my heart, my country!  
Land of the rainbow gold,  
For flood and fire and famine  
She pays us back threefold.  
Over the thirsty paddocks,  
Watch, after many days,  
The filmy veil of greenness  
That thickens as we gaze.*

*An opal-hearted country,  
A wilful, lavish land –  
All you who have not loved her,  
You will not understand –  
Though earth holds many splendours,  
Wherever I may die,  
I know to what brown country  
My homing thoughts will fly.*  
Dorothea MacKellar (1885-1968)

The more I identified with the sentiments in the poem the greater my bewilderment. It was that inner tension, experienced, yet not understood as a child which had a significant role in shaping my perceptions and understanding of the world, and my growing sense of self. It is that tension, which even today, fuels my love of this land and passion for seeking justice within it and forms the basis of my strength based practice.

The tension of which I speak relates to two, for that time, very unusual aspects of my childhood and youth. The first was the reason we had gone to live in the town – my father had resumed his profession as a soil conservationist after a failed business venture. Born in the western districts of our state, he loved the land and had a passion for its preservation decades before the concept of conservation became popular and politicised.

Each school holidays I would travel with him into the countryside, visiting farming properties requiring soil conservation work to reclaim land scoured into deep gullies as a result of poor farming methods and the denuding of the hilltops. He would take me into those gullies and teach me about the soil, its different layers and how they were formed. Sometimes the gullies were so deep the sky above me became just a narrow strip of blue. I learnt that the '*flooding rains*' of which Dorothea MacKellar wrote and for which we longed, also meant that, because of poor farming practices the land would be further scoured and ravaged.

My father had introduced me to a spiritual view of soil as a dynamic 'living' part of our world which we needed to nurture and protect if we were to benefit from its riches. His mantra, when speaking to ministers of religion was '*you save souls – I save the soil*'. Few people took him seriously. I am often glad that he did not live to see the extent to which the Australian landscape and '*the core of its heart*' as a nation has been ravaged by development though in truth he prophesied what we are now experiencing – especially the increasing salinity of inland river systems.

Soon I learnt how to 'read the land' with an eye to how water would flow across it and the possible effects of that flow. I was beginning to understand, and internalise the concepts of connection and interconnection and the potentially destructive results when key relationships are disrupted.

The second tension of which I spoke earlier related to our living conditions and those of the Aboriginal people. Our newly build house was located on the route between the Black's Camp and the local schools and swimming pool. The term '*Black's Camp*' was the name given to it by the local white citizens. It is used now in its starkness to reinforce the extreme marginalisation and denigration of the people living in that camp. Its people had been made aliens in their own land, forced to squat on the periphery of prosperous white settlement. The mere existence of the camp exemplified the extent to which white people had assumed superiority over them and had forced them out of their country. Not for them was there an acknowledgement of their '*love a sunburnt country, a land of sweeping plains, of rugged mountain ranges, of droughts and flooding rains*'. Their world was the dry Black's camp - a no-go area for white people – intruders chased away by the dogs roaming its precincts. Desolate and marginalised as it was it was still 'home' for its inhabitants.



I can't recall exactly how it came about but we were the only white children allowed to visit the camp. Maybe it was because, unlike many others, we did not set our dogs on the Aboriginal people when they walked passed our house, or because we invited the children to come and play, or because we just said hello but soon we were frequent visitors to the camp and the children to our home. I was fascinated and enthralled to see what could be made of materials salvaged from the dump. To this day I remember marvelling at the shiny brown earth floor polished hard by diligent sweeping. To my young mind it was difficult to understand how earth could be made clean by sweeping yet the evidence was before my eyes.

Many of the humpies were ringed with sculptured figures made of disused tyres. Black swans tyres came to life as flower beds, and painted stones marked out the boundaries between each humpy. Even then I could discern who cared for their home and who didn't. We had the privilege of being welcomed into homes but we were also soon identified as being '*friendly with the blacks*'. Had it not been for my close friendship with a daughter of one of the town's prominent businessmen I too would have been ostracised.

My parent's reputation too as confidantes and people who welcomed outsiders from all walks of life into their home earned us some grudging respect but also meant we were never really seen as part of the local 'in group'. I looked forward to inter-school visits as we were guaranteed to have someone stay with us who was seen as being '*a bit weird*'. The teachers organising the billets always gave us the non Anglo children. I loved it as often it meant I got a geography or social studies lesson right inside my home. The hypocrisy of it though did not escape me or my older sister - we were valued as a billeting family because we took those children no-one else wanted in their homes.

Through my association with those Aboriginal families I had the privilege of learning first hand about a host of social justice issues. It also meant that I did not accept as truth the myths often circulated about how dirty, dishonest and unreliable Aboriginal people were. I KNEW differently.

The narrative now fast forwards to March 1996. A whole generation has been born since the 1967 Referendum which abolished the White Australia Policy and recognised Aboriginal people as Australian citizens. The High Court of Australia's June 1992 Decision [5] finally and formally acknowledged Indigenous ownership of the land. Under British sovereignty land had been granted on the basis of '*terra nullius*' (although the Australian land mass was inhabited no-one owned the land). Eddie Mabo [6], a Murray Islander, had begun the movement to have this myth legally overturned.

In 1989 I had moved to live in the Northern Territory of Australia. Initially our home was in a small mining community within the famed, world heritage listed, Kakadu National Park [7]. The world heritage listing, in part, resulted from the presence of Aboriginal cultural sites and the living culture of the Aboriginal Traditions Owners. Part of the '*living culture*' being that the Aboriginal people retained and used their languages, and for many, English was their fourth or fifth language.

The Traditional Owners were acknowledged as the true owners of the land which had been 'returned to them' when the Park was created from Crown Land (government owned land). Few people, other than the Aboriginal people saw the irony of having the land for which they could establish continuous occupation for 50,000 years being restored to them by a people whose occupancy of the wider Australian land mass had only occurred in the previous two hundred years. In Kakadu I discovered and came to love another part of our "*Wide Brown Land*".

Kakadu is vast, covering a geographical area of 20,000sq.kms. Within it borders are in excess of 5,000 recorded rock art sites, unique flora and fauna and an entire river system. I revelled in its vastness and sense of agelessness which seemed to permeate the air as a quiet subliminal hum – as if the earth and rocks themselves were alive. Much of the rock art told stories of Aboriginal spiritual beings like that of the Rainbow Serpent (creator of the land) and Namarrgon (Lightning Man) [8]. Lightning Man made thunder and lightning by clapping together the stone hammers on his head, elbows and knees. And what a magnificent show he provided when the monsoonal storms rolled towards us. The air vibrated with booming thunder and giant lightning flashes – energy so intense that often the earth literally shook as if to herald '*the drumming of an army, the steady soaking rain*".

After a short while I began to make connections with the local Aboriginal people, most of who lived in shanty communities outside the town boundary. Again I was witnessing an example of white dominance acting to exclude Aboriginal people despite their acknowledged ownership of the land. The dominance came about because the town had been built to house workers attached to the nearby Ranger Uranium mine. The area within the mining lease and town precincts had been legally excised from Kakadu National Park thereby giving ownership of the mine site and town to the mining company which also had legal responsibility for demolishing both sites and rehabilitating the area once the minerals are exhausted (2020). This legal arrangement made it impossible for anyone who was not employed, or partnered to an employed person, to live in the town as all housing was linked to employment.

Some of my connections with the local Aboriginal people began within Sunday church services attended by a group of devout Aboriginal worshippers and an amalgam of non-Catholics. A relaxed, participative service format included the sharing of 'The Peace' – what I irreverently called '*kissy kissy time*'. It took me a while to realise that many of the Aboriginal people, most of whom sat at the back of the church, rarely were included in the wider sharing. I noticed that they appeared shy of coming forward and, except for a few, the white people similarly seemed unable to take the steps towards them. I prefer to sit at the back as it gives me a chance to observe the wider context of my environment. In this particular church I noticed that it placed me and my husband amongst



the Aboriginal worshippers. It thus became natural for us to reach out during 'kissy kissy time' to shake the hand or embrace those around us. One woman, Merrill (not her real name), was loathe to hold out her hand as it was misshapen from leprosy. One day, as I sat next to Merrill I noticed her hand looked swollen and sore. Without thinking I reached out to touch it gently asking quietly 'does it hurt' to which she nodded. We had established a bond of caring and understanding which endured throughout my time in that community.

By March 1996 I felt at home in the Northern Territory and had developed a deeper respect for the land and a growing appreciation, albeit applied, of the connection Aboriginal people had with it. I had obtained work as a part time tutor in the School of Social Work in Darwin, some two hundred and fifty kilometres from my community. Each Monday I drove to Darwin to spend several days on my teaching commitments.

Darwin is a small tropical city perched on the edge of what is known as the Top End of Australia. It is a very multicultural community and its people pride themselves on their relaxed and tolerant attitudes. Subtle signs of white superiority and the marginalisation of Indigenous people were nevertheless still evident though few would acknowledge this as to do so would run contrary to the dominant ethos of an accepting community. One day I noticed a small article in the local newspaper which reported that 'long-grassers', the name given to the homeless, were being imprisoned for failure to pay fines related to sleeping in public places. The fines were executed in accordance with a local government by-law which made it illegal to sleep in public places between sun down and sun up. Enacted in 1983 in response to the growing bands of hippies taking up residence along the foreshore during the balmy months of the northern Dry Season the legislation was now being used to clean up Darwin's streets and parks of its long-grass dwellers. The result of these policies and their enforcement meant that Aboriginal people were being incarcerated for non-payment of the \$50.00 fine. Their bedding was also being confiscated.

Incensed and appalled that this should be happening in our supposedly tolerant community I decided to take action. Drawing on Lady Godiva's tenth century example of direct protest by public action [9] I decided to sleep out in one of central Darwin's main parks as gesture of protest at the way the provisions of the by-law were being enforced. Perhaps it was the inner stirrings of my English aristocratic ancestry or a simple belief that if I was to retain a sense of congruency and integrity I had to do something to voice my objection to what was happening. A friend and I paid for a full page advertisement in the newspaper. The advertisement, in the form of a letter, called on churches and others, to speak out against this practice reminding them that their properties were built on land taken from the ancestors of those people who were now being targeted. It announced that on a certain date a month hence that I would publicly defy the Council's use of the by-law by sleeping out and that I would go to prison rather than pay the fine. I signed the letter, "Pam Trotman, Social Worker". All I wanted to achieve was a formal statement that someone did not endorse the Council's actions.

My actions unleashed a storm of outrage. It didn't help that the newspaper, sensing a good story, made me and my proposed actions front page news for that edition. A photograph of me covered almost half the front page. I was woken early that morning by a telephone call. The male caller screamed obscenities at me before hanging up abruptly. Such was my introduction to public protest! That I had stated my profession as social worker seemed to embarrass many of my colleagues. Although nothing explicit was said, I felt a barrier being erected between myself and other social workers, especially those who worked in government positions. Only a few actively supported me. No follow-up comment came from the Australian Association of Social Workers despite the pursuit of social justice being one of its core objectives. My visit to the Darwin Police Station to ensure our safety whilst we engaged in the protest was met with a long haranguing from a senior officer. I left feeling totally pummelled.

I had come full circle in my journey of recognising and confronting the forces by which prejudice, alienation and injustices are spawned. But the narrative was incomplete as I was only then beginning to synthesise the lessons of the last three decades of my professional practice. Core principles such as 'self determination', 'respect for difference' and the pursuit of social justice [10] were resurfacing as conscious pillars of that practice. Perhaps this was because I had returned to the formal teaching environment. For whatever reason, I found it increasingly difficult to ignore the myriad of examples where I assumed as rights what were in reality social privileges. Nor was I able to remain silent in the face of other people's expression of dominance simply because they too had been socialised into a dominant position within society.

The more I grappled with this the more it became evident that much of my social work practice had been focussed on pursuing social justice for clients in relation to the actions of a third party rather than on my own practice. I had become an effective advocate and taught many people assertiveness strategies in the pursuit of their equitable participation in the community and in obtaining a share of its resources. But the incongruencies experienced in my childhood remained as an inner nagging on my conscience. I was able to do all these things as a result of privilege – especially the privilege of having parents who encouraged me as a child and young woman to think beyond the social constraints of my gender. Not for me were the limited horizons of a small country town. I was helped to attain the abilities to 'make the world my oyster' words passed down by my mother which she had learnt from her naval officer father. That was his only legacy to me as he had died when my mother was ten years of age.

The inner naggings soon caused me to explore the extent to which I maintained my social and professional position solely on the basis of that privilege. Slowly I began to reflect on those aspects of my practice which, unintentionally, served to maintain inequalities and injustices within the systems for which I worked and in which I



lived. The tensions heightened even further in 1999 when I began work as a counsellor with an Aboriginal medical service.

One of the most challenging aspects of my work with this client group was finding ways of breaking down the effects of their internalised oppression and my internalised dominance [11]. They had been socialised to give white people deference whilst I, coming from white upper middle class and minor English aristocratic stock, was accustomed to being respected. Often the deference was expressed in requests for me to tell clients what to do and the frequently explicit expectation that I, the powerful and competent one, "*would fix them up*". The notion of self determination was an anathema for many people, especially those who had learnt that survival within the dominant society meant demonstrating unquestioning deference to white thinking and expectations.

Yet they repeatedly turned up for counselling – often seething with outrage at their circumstances; outrage which threatened to overwhelm them and me as their counsellor. Negotiating the pitfalls of transference and counter-transference [12] became an ever present requirement as I struggled to ensure my own reactions to their internalised oppression and my internalised dominance, did not contribute to their existing confusion and maintenance of their oppression.

The one thing that saved me from succumbing to the quagmire of this destructive interaction being the deep conviction that I was no better than anyone else and that if it was good enough for me to expect to be given the opportunities to become self determining then, I needed to afford others the same opportunities otherwise I would be an arch hypocrite – an unthinkable prospect. Using the same principle, I also was loathe to accept responsibility for other people's lives often asserting that I had enough to do making sure I remained balanced and well functioning and that they had within them the ability to overcome their troubles. I repeated the assertion that our shared challenge was to discover and harness those abilities – often likening them to the Hindu notion of the 'Inner Charioteer' [13].

With some clients I felt as if I was engaged in an emotional and spiritual arm wrestle as I struggled to help them to control, then harness, powerful negative energies to avoid being destroyed by them and to channel them into creative forces for change and renewal. There was no time or place for pretences or posturing. This was in-your-face grappling with issues of deep human tragedy and pathos.

The more the counselling role took me through these realms the more I had to confront my own demons and fears. They took the shape of inner doubts about my skills and knowledge, of fears of being overwhelmed by the pathos and tragedy poured out in counselling sessions throughout the day. And too there were the demons of confusion over what was the best way to resolve my own interpersonal and inner conflicts along with recognising the need to resist the temptation to claim the client's achievements as mine own. The later demon was a constant companion as the more people found resolution to their problems the more they told others about me. Soon new clients were self-referring with the explicit expectation '*can you do to me what you did to him/her as he/she is a changed person and I want to be like that*'. I think the only thing that saved me from this particular demon was a deep distrust of guru's. I was not going to hand over control of my life to someone else by blindly following his or her teachings or directions, viewing it as being tantamount to placing oneself in spiritual servitude. For me salvation could only be found through my own journeying while allowing myself to be influenced and guided, but not controlled, by others. Achieving the balance had become an integral part of my own life's odyssey and I later came to recognise it as a mainstay of my strengths-based life and professional practice.

As I connected with clients in their journey towards wholeness I discovered that I need not fear being overwhelmed by their stories of trauma and suffering. Slowly I began to hear the voice of the survivor and to recognise that it was the survivor spirit prompting the person to seek wholeness. That shift in my listening focus meant that whilst I still acknowledged their pain and suffering I was often in awe of the beautiful spirit which had managed to preserve itself from the full onslaught of traumatic experiences. Soon my style of questioning and reflecting began to change. Questions such as: '*what was it that enabled you to survive that horrific experience*' helped the client to also focus on that inner strength and beauty. Just as I had responded to the pain in Merrill's hand that day in church I found myself reaching out to people in their woundedness. Gone was the fear that I would be overwhelmed by it. In its place was a sense of connection to our shared humanity. Together we would then chart the course forward towards a new sense of wholeness and renewal of spirit.

I shared my knowledge and skills with clients, explaining the purpose of key therapeutic approaches. They in turn invested their wisdom and knowledge to the process of deciding what was the best way for me to apply knowledge and skills to promote and facilitate their journey. Gone were the requests, and demands, for me to fix them up. Rarely did a counselling session finish with either of us feeling exhausted or spent. The ability to recognise and share in one's universal connectedness and interconnectedness served to enrich and sustain each of us.

Often I would find myself sitting on that river bank of my childhood drawing energy from the eternal patterns of renewal contained within its life force. I began to practice treading more gently among the relationships of my inner and outer spirit with the result that anxieties flowing from fear and doubts became less common. Slowly I was beginning to find my own flow of inner life which could find its course across the land without ravaging it or drowning people with its intensity.

The narrative has now reached the year 2006. My time with the Aboriginal Medical Service has come to a close – the decision to resign made after heeding the inner voice that said it was time to go. I have rejoined the Australia



Association of Social Workers and have become active in promoting its core objectives, especially those that relate to the pursuit of social justice, advancement of humanity and contribution to building the profession's knowledge base.

Around me are countless ugly examples of humanity's capacity for rapacious action, most of them born of fear and many justified by reference to religious dogma. Whole nations are tearing each other apart and others are being ravaged by the economic, political and social exploitation of the dominant few, my country among them. It's no longer the fear of the Yellow Hordes but of Muslim radicals. Australia, once the new home for many refugees fleeing injustices or ravaged lands is now the place where government policies excise whole tracts of land to avoid the prospect of boat people arriving on our shores in search of refuge [14]. The White Australia policy is again being reintroduced in the form of a test to ensure new settlers can demonstrate an understanding of and respect for '*Traditional Australian Values*' one of which being the ability to speak English. Few people recognised that this policy, targeted at newcomers, serves to exclude many Indigenous people within their own land as their knowledge of written English is well below that of the level suggested as part of the policy [15].

It would be easy to despair at these developments, each one being an assault on our shared humanity but if we take the time to listen to the voices of reason, compassion and connectedness we can still hear the quiet hum of the energy within. The sound of clamouring, fearful politicians, and harsh cries of people outraged by years of oppression becoming less dominant, thereby enabling us to stay tuned to the collective hum of our shared humanity.

I believe that is our challenge for the future – to focus our energies on finding ways to retain, rebuild and restore connections across racial, religious, and political landscapes so that when the steady soaking rains of renewal pour upon us, we are not swamped or scoured as they gush across our inner and contextual terrains. By confronting our own inner demons we will be better prepared to stand firm in the face of external threats – using our individual and collective strengths to shape a craft that will sustain us should the floods come, and provide a vehicle through which we, in diversity, can build new homes and where we can dwell in peace. A pipe dream? I think not. Is it not at the heart of political struggles and the objective of every quest for justice?

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# **'Work with Me:' Training For Best Practice With Substance-Using Mothers - Diminishing Risk by Promoting Strengths**

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*Historically, Canadian child welfare discourse, reflective of a shaming culture, has condemned the substance-using mother. A focus on deficits excludes resilience, adversely affecting both child protection workers and substance-using mothers. Fortunately, a strengths-based discourse and practice are emerging. This paradigm shift demonstrates potential for reconstructing child welfare discourse and practice as helpful rather than harmful.*

*Consistent with a commitment to a strengths-based approach, this paper discusses findings from two surveys and a qualitative study conducted by the author in 2003. Based on these research findings, strengths-based child protection social worker training was developed, conducted, evaluated and revised.*

*Given the value of a strengths-based approach, innovative approaches in teaching workers how to work effectively with substance-using mother are discussed. To prepare workers to recognize and build on strengths of substance-using mothers, the training cultivates workers' existing strengths in knowledge, experience, practice and values. Former substance-using mothers co-facilitate the training. Recommendations include developing similar training for social work supervisors and foster parents.*

Canadian child welfare discourse pertaining to women substance users has been morally condemning, punitive and counterproductive to women's mental, physical and emotional health.<sup>1</sup> The media has repeatedly portrayed mothers as 'the risk to their children...positioned in dramatic opposition to the plight of the children.'<sup>2</sup> Thus the condemnation of the substance-using mother is powerfully underscored, shaping both public opinion and social policy and practice.

Reflecting the predominant cultural view and discourse, the nature of child protection service delivery, policy, legislation and risk assessment tools have put social workers in a policing rather than a helping role.<sup>3</sup> To further aggravate a harmful situation, social workers are inadequately informed about the substance-using mothers that dominate their caseload.<sup>4</sup> Social work education has historically reflected the dominant view that any 'good' mother should perform mothering independently. Mothers who require practical or emotional support have been viewed as 'bad' mothers<sup>5</sup>. This is particularly true with substance-using mothers, socially constructed as demonic, unloving and uncaring towards their children.<sup>6</sup> The resulting surveillance and confrontational approaches punish rather than help.

A focus on deficits has excluded resilience, adversely affecting both child protection social workers and substance-using mothers. Fortunately, a strengths-based discourse and practice are emerging in North America. In the United States, a public discourse of strengths-based child protection practice has been underway for over ten years. Putting standards into practice is more challenging, requiring training for workers, supervisors, and foster parents that negotiate these systems. A critical revision of the discourse, commitment from management, and the allocation of adequate resources are necessary to produce significant change.

This paper will discuss findings from two surveys and a qualitative study conducted in 2003, and the subsequent development of child protection worker training. The surveys measured British Columbia child protection workers' current knowledge of substance-use theories and interventions, and the availability of relevant training for social workers. The qualitative study, conducted in 2003 with child protection workers and former substance-using mothers, examined the mother-worker relationship.

Child protection worker training, developed in response to the qualitative study, was conducted in 2003, then evaluated and revised based on workers' evaluations. The initial training and reasons for revision are discussed. The revised training acknowledges workers' fears and builds on their strengths.

## **Surveying Worker Knowledge and Needs**

Child protection workers are not well informed about drug-use and its subculture. Neither are they cognizant of current theories and models of assessment and intervention with drug users, although a 2002<sup>7</sup> survey of 40 child protection social workers in British Columbia indicated a caseload substantially comprised of substance-using mothers (almost 70% by social worker estimates). However, child welfare social workers' self-rated knowledge of current interventions, approaches and theory regarding problematic substance use was relatively poor.<sup>8</sup> Regarding the stages of change theoretical model of addiction, 60% of workers surveyed had a self-rated knowledge of 2/5 or lower. Averaged, their self-rated knowledge of harm reduction practice was 2.8/5. Thirty per cent of workers surveyed knew



nothing about the bio-psycho-social-spiritual theory of addiction. Almost 70% of workers rated their knowledge of a strengths/empowerment approach at 3/5 or less. These findings are troubling given the number of substance users on workers' caseloads.

The survey also asked:

- 1) What do social workers need to know to better help substance-using mothers?
- 2) What challenges do social workers face in working relationships with substance-using mothers?

A thematic analysis yielded significant results. Workers said they wanted to know how to facilitate change: 'how to encourage change...without resorting to removal of children.' They want knowledge and understanding of street drugs and their effects: 'understanding of current drugs, usage, patterns and how they affect the individual and their parenting.' Workers also want to know more about the social context of problematic substance use: 'more comprehension of the overall issues.'

Workers have difficulty comprehending the attraction of continued problematic substance use, given devastating consequences. The power of drug use and the drug-using subculture is a mystery to most. Consistent with principles of cross-cultural social work, workers would benefit from more knowledge of the culture and a better understanding of the attractions of substance use and its subculture.

Workers frequently cited 'denial' as a major challenge in working with substance-using mothers: 'denial, rationalization, minimizing, blaming.' This is significant, since substance-using mothers are not in a position to disclose problematic substance use when removal of their children is a likely outcome. Adversarial approaches result in denial, while strengths-based approaches result in trust and disclosure.

A survey of university and college curricula relating to substance misuse within social work programs in British Columbia was also conducted in 2003. The range of college and university social work courses in addictions varied, with one major university offering none at the undergraduate level.<sup>9</sup>

A review of social worker training offered by the provincial government's child welfare department looked specifically at substance-use related material. Findings were assessed in relation to minimal requirements given the estimates of substance-users on workers' caseload. Although the provincial government has offered substance misuse training in the past, it was short-lived, scanty and unavailable since 1999.

### The Qualitative Study

The qualitative study was conducted in 2003 with three child protection social workers and four former substance-using mothers who had previous child protection files. Findings indicate a predominantly adversarial relationship continuum with positive outcomes associated with a strengths-based, collaborative worker approach.

Child protection workers experience frustration working in a child welfare system unable to respond effectively to substance-using mothers:<sup>10</sup>

*There are a lot of standards written, that we are expected to follow that aren't, that don't consider, don't take the nature of the relationship into account at all...*

Workers and mothers identified effective, family-centred practice approaches:

*(The social worker) took the time to...help me with the relationship with the foster parents and, um, you know, kind of make it more welcome that way. I mean my children still live with these foster parents, right, they've been adopted by them...she took the time to just build on that...the contact is still open*

The shared parenting model, despite its value, has been the exception rather than the rule in child welfare practice. This option has been successfully formalized elsewhere.<sup>11</sup>

Fear governs the relationship between substance-using mothers and workers: workers' fear stemming from their lack of knowledge of problematic substance use. For mothers, confrontational approaches diminish possibilities for open relationships. Workers know that 'people are scared of social workers when it means you're taking their children...(they) just want to tell you things that you just want to hear so you'll go away.' Workers expressed feeling distrusted and disliked. Workers in the research talked about play 'private eye;' mothers, afraid and ashamed, hide, deny and minimize the truth.

### Mothers and Workers Speak: Strengths

Alternatively, the research spoke to the value of strengths-based approaches, the importance of relationship and feeling heard. Workers reveal what works for them in these excerpts from the qualitative study:



- 'When I start working with families I say I'm not perfect...'
- 'We are all human'
- 'Talk to parents as if they are somebody, and as if what they say counts'
- 'I want things to go better for you, I don't want your child to continue being in care...what can we do here?'
- 'To feel some nurture, because ...the person is in pain...'
- 'Never make promises I can't follow up on'
- 'Explain the process, explain how they can challenge the process'
- 'Mum was involved in the ...plan'

Workers recognized the importance and effectiveness of work that is strengths-based and collaborative:

- 'Social workers to...not feel that they needed to control everything, but rather that we're sharing...the situation'
- 'We're all involved in it...it's not a me and you thing...(it's) a community thing'
- 'We can do risk assessments...but what is going to help her...where does she want help?'
- 'When you're applying for a new order...sit down and say ok, yes I'm doing this, but I'm still here to support you and help you through this'
- 'Working from strengths...establish some kind of connection'

Mothers express a need for support in their recovery from problematic substance use: '[it] seemed like an enormous wall, of everything, having to change everything and to have all these people know it.' One worker gave a detailed example of best practice and a positive outcome:

*she...phoned me up a couple days later...when I went over, she acknowledged that she been using...she did trust me, knew that by telling me that I wasn't going to jump to conclusions, or jump to judgments, and not going to come and take the kids, that's what helped in that situation...I listened, I just listened to what she had to say... then worked to, you know, started to talk about a plan, something needs to happen here so what are we gonna do - together, right? And to work together to help change this ...what do you need?*

What mothers found helpful was workers' faith in them, willingness to collaborate, and non-judgemental approaches:

- 'had some faith in me...'
- 'got this feeling like she didn't look down on me'
- 'she gave me some choices...she connected me to the foster mother, helped me to, made me feel welcomed'
- 'she wasn't just a worker, she was getting to be like a human being to me, with feelings and stuff, it really helped...a sense of empathy from the worker, cause you're scared'
- 'realizing, like, she's not out to get me...she's not going to steal my children, she's willing, she's there to work with me'
- 'she was non-judgemental'

### **Recent Changes: British Columbia**

In British Columbia, the Ministry for Children and Family Development's revised (2004) *Child and Family Services Standards* respond to the need for a strengths-based model: 'Standard 7...also promotes services that identify and



build on existing strengths and resiliency, rather than services that address only risks and deficits (June, 2004: 27).’ This standard requires workers to collect ‘relevant information about the family’s strengths, needs and vulnerabilities (204:28).’ Standard 14, Family Development Response, is particularly promising. It is described as ‘an alternative response in circumstances where identified risks of harm to a child can be managed...’ and calls for ‘a thorough assessment of strengths and risks within the family’ (2004:54).’

The recent Children and Youth Review in British Columbia (Hughes: 2006) recommends that the Ministry’s service transformation be supported by worker training, a monetary investment in services and adequate preparation and evaluation. Workers in this qualitative study echo the importance of preparation:

*there’s a presumption...(we) know about building a relationship, and the value of that, but learning to integrate that with Ministry standards about child safety, it’s a long...process, there’s a lot of talk, in training, there’s a lot of work on removing kids, when you do it and why, but we never once talked about returning kids...*

The power of the documents that guide practice cannot be overestimated: the ‘tendency for these workers to emphasize personal deficits may be accounted for by their required daily use of assessment formulations that stress the dysfunctional aspects of the client.’<sup>12</sup> Best practice must be supported through philosophically consistent and helpful training and documents: ‘even with supportive legal frameworks, drift toward more forensically driven practice can occur at the expense of family support models’ (Connolly 2005). Practice characterized by investigation, documentation of deficits, and the collection of evidence to build a case against mothers occurs not only ‘at the expense of family support models’, but also at the expense of the family itself.

Fortunately, evaluated and valid strengths assessments are numerous and easily obtained. Several excellent examples of strengths assessments and discussions of their usefulness were found in *Families in Society*<sup>13</sup> some dating back to 1984.<sup>14</sup> Dunst, Trivette and Deal (2003) provide a number of strengths based family assessment scales.

Alternative documents, entrenched in the child welfare system in Western Europe (Connolly 2005), are in use in various American states. The State of Mississippi, Division of Family and Children Services, employs a *Family Centered Strengths and Risk Assessment Guidebook*. In addition to a shift in discourse, a shift in practice has also become increasingly prevalent in the U.S. In Minnesota, for example, the alternative response program has already been evaluated; benefits of the alternative response model are substantial, positive and cost-effective.<sup>15</sup>

### **Cross-Cultural Awareness: Understanding the Substance-using Mother**

It is equally important for child welfare workers that drug-using culture be demystified. The language, values, and other aspects of this culture are invisible to ‘outsiders’. The hidden aspects of this subculture are elusive, and the media contributes frightening texts and images associated with substance use. Particularly prone to demonic social construction is the substance-using mother.<sup>16</sup> Prohibition of substances makes many drug users de facto criminals, necessitating secrecy and perpetuating fear in society at large.<sup>17</sup> Given the prevalence of these stereotypes, and how ‘(w)orker discomfort can be an impediment to exploring the critical issues,’<sup>18</sup> worker education is vital to improving this relationship.

Principles of cross-cultural social work have a valuable application in work with substance-using mothers, considering Raheim’s assertion that the ‘prior contact each has had with the other’s cultural group, the stereotypes each holds about that group, and each person’s culturally prescribed rules of social interaction may lead to misjudgements of the other.’<sup>19</sup> It is important for workers to acquire ‘specific knowledge of the client’s cultural group’<sup>20</sup> and to acknowledge the power differential in their relationship with substance-using mothers.

Workers express a need for this knowledge. With relevant training, they can develop knowledge of drug-using culture and substance-using mothers’ place in it. Given the prominence of shame<sup>21</sup> within this population, workers’ awareness of their values and beliefs about substance-using mothers is imperative. With active organizational support to use strengths-based collaborative tools, workers can begin to practice effectively and responsively.

### **Promoting Strengths: Child Protection Worker Training**

#### **Responding to the Study**

A training program for child welfare social workers was developed and conducted with 20 child welfare social workers in Vancouver, Canada. The training incorporated best practice research, effective strengths-based interventions and experiential learning. Former substance-using mothers were actively engaged in facilitating the training.



## Responding to Training Participants

Social workers' evaluations of the training indicated, overwhelmingly, an appreciation of the opportunity to hear directly from former substance-using mothers who have had experiences with child welfare social workers. Workers valued experiential exercises relating to power and control issues. Workers appreciated discussion of the precipitating research, relevant theories and interventions; and, *to some extent*, the social context of substance use.

Workers expressed concern about focusing on negative experiences with protection workers in the first part of the training. The original training presented a volume of information about the social context and construction of substance-using mothers: lone mothers and poverty, gender and class issues, shame and stigma, the policing role of the social worker, and ethical responsibilities of the social worker to effect social change. Workers found the detailed discussion of lone mothers and poverty gratuitous; they expressed that they already know these families are poor. Workers also felt uncomfortable with the extensive information presented about the policing role of protection workers. Understandably sensitive to perceived criticism, they reacted defensively. Similarly, workers felt frustrated by presentation material about social workers' ethical responsibilities to effect social change; this must have been difficult to hear for helpers navigating an oppressive system.

This initial training took less than a strengths-based approach, delivering an extensive problem description. As the qualitative study showed, workers experience role strain in child welfare work, and are negatively affected by the surveillance and policing aspects currently intrinsic to their work. Workers attended the training to seek solutions to a recognized problem. It is important to help workers build on the qualities that initially brought them to social work, and to acknowledge how these qualities are repressed by systemic constraints. Providing them an opportunity to develop familiarity with street drugs and their effects and the subculture reduces fear and increases understanding. In response to the thematic analysis of worker evaluations, the training was revised to increase time spent on solutions and decrease time spent on problem description.

Consistent with a commitment to strengths-based discourse, the training was revised to cultivate workers strengths, beginning with discussion of workers' current knowledge and strengths in working with this population. Definitions of strengths perspectives are elicited from participants. Examples of workers' current strengths-based approaches are identified. The training revision consistently identifies and builds on worker strengths on personal and professional levels. Examining our values and beliefs about substance-using mothers may be a delicate process. By exploring media and literary representations of substance-using mothers from contemporary culture, a context is provided for how we have internalized myths and assumptions. There is also a section that explores our assumptions. Through the use of experiential exercises, social workers can increase awareness and understanding of their own assumptions.

A similar method is used in exploration of power: through the use of literature and film, our relationship to power is explored outside of everyday work and life. By highlighting the social context of our relationship to power, a different perspective is cultivated. Experiential exercises relating to power are also used to enhance learning. To make the connection from learning to everyday work, practice examples are elicited and discussed, consistently focusing on worker strengths.

Former substance-using mothers co-facilitate the training, providing an opportunity for workers and mothers to interact. Involving mothers in the training allows mothers' voice to be heard. Mothers are also able to demystify the subculture and its attraction for workers. This is critical in reducing workers' fear and increasing their comprehension of the 'overall issues.' Workers identified mothers' participation as a particularly important and helpful part of the original training.

Attending to workers' responses has highlighted the value of a strengths-based approach. Consistent with the goal of improving practice with and outcomes for substance-using mothers, this training attempts to respond to the needs of both workers and mothers. Training, like practice, is more effective when a collaborative and strengths-based approach is adopted. *The revised training is included as 'Appendix A.'*

## Recommendations for Policy, Practice and Further Research

*'realizing, like, she's not out to get me,*

*she's not out to steal my children,*

*she's willing, she's there to work with me'*

Historically, we have posed child protection in direct opposition to family protection, creating a tragic familial divide.

We are now compelled to think outside the box. It is essential for workers to reviewing their values and beliefs, shaped by outdated, constricting definitions of motherhood and drug use. Training initiatives would improve both practice and outcome. Rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of training will ensure the promotion of evidence-based best practice. The practice application of relevant training would be enhanced by management support and



sufficient allocation of resources. Further evaluation of current assessment tools and other documents that govern child welfare practice will be important in supporting positive change. Outdated concepts inform these documents and contribute to negative outcomes for both workers and mothers. Recommended research directions also include exploration and evaluation of alternative care arrangements that support birth families. Assumptions about children's best interests require re-examination, particularly in terms of maintaining connections with birth parents. Research pertaining to children's views is scarce.<sup>22</sup>

The development of open fostering relationships and shared parenting options is recommended. Foster parents have a unique opportunity to work with birth parents; social workers help determine how this relationship proceeds. How social workers present and construct birth mothers to foster parents impacts outcomes. Joint strengths-based training with mothers, workers, supervisors and foster parents, supported by further development of helpful child welfare policy and practice standards, could significantly re-shape the course of child welfare practice with substance-using mothers.

### ***Revised Training Outline***

## **Best Practice With Substance-Using Mothers: Diminishing Risk by Promoting Strengths**

### **Introduction: How the Training Originated**

1. Survey of social workers' knowledge and challenges: summary
2. Survey of education and training
3. Qualitative research findings: the relationship (Research Poster)

#### **A. What is a "Strengths-Based Approach?"**

##### **B.**

1. Group Definition of Strengths-Based Approach
2. Recognizing our personal strengths: what are they?
3. Recognizing strengths in others: identify challenges

#### **B. Mothering and Drug Use**

1. Values and beliefs held about substance - using mothers
2. Experiential Exercise: Assumptions
3. Experiences that shaped our values and beliefs about drug use: movie clips
4. Our conceptions and expectations of mothers, motherhood: movie clips
5. Media myths about drug using mothers (use examples from recent press and research – group deconstruction and reframing)
6. Drug use as an adaptive response
7. Looking at our own "addictions" – how we cope

#### **B. Cross-Cultural Awareness: Demystifying Street Drugs and Culture**

1. Types of drugs commonly used: appearance, packaging, buying, using
2. Drug-using subculture: values, beliefs, language
3. Effects of drugs: physical, mental and emotional
4. Discussion



### C. Power and Collaboration

1. Exploring power
2. Experiential Exercises: Broken Squares; Dream House
3. Feelings and power: "When I feel powerless, I...." "When I feel powerful, I..."
4. Acknowledging the power differential in practice: why and how?
5. Research findings – in print - relating to power in the relationship
6. Film; theatre; literature pieces about power
7. Comfort and power: examples of collaborative practice from workers and mothers

### D. Current Models of Intervention and Treatment with Substance Users

1. Bio-psycho-social-spiritual model
2. Stages of change
3. Motivational interviewing
4. Harm reduction
5. The function and *timing* of recovery resources: withdrawal management, support recovery, residential and outpatient treatment programs
6. Twelve step and sixteen step programs
7. Alternatives to twelve step programs

### E. Using a Strengths and Safety Assessment

1. Strengths and safety assessment tools
2. Using a parental strengths and safety assessment
3. Developing a collaborative family plan of care
4. Building *supportive* documentation (see Strengths-based Report to Court)
5. Discussing safety within a collaborative relationship: Signs of Safety
6. Conversing with foster parents, supporting birth families and foster parents

### F. Evaluations

1. Workers complete an evaluation of the training
2. Three months follow- up: Has training impacted practice and/or outcomes?

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, 2000; Covington, 2002; Gustavsson & MacEachron, 1997; Smyth & Miller, 1997; Straussner & Attia, 2002

<sup>2</sup> Greaves, L., Varcoe, C., Poole, N., Morrow, M., Johnson, J., Pederson, A., Irwin, L., (2002), p28

<sup>3</sup> Boyd, 1999; Buchanan & Young, 2002; De Montigny, 1995; Greaves et al, 2002; Tracy & Farkas, 1994

<sup>4</sup> Buchanan & Young, 2002; Greaves et al, 2002; Klee, 2002; Poole & Isaac 2001

<sup>5</sup> Callahan and Callahan, 1997; Murphy and Rosenbaum, 1999; Swift, 1995

<sup>6</sup> Boyd, 1999; Campbell, 2000; Kandall, 1996

<sup>7</sup> Conducted by the author, through University of British Columbia, School of Social Work, 2002

<sup>8</sup> 40 child protection social workers were asked to self –rate knowledge of: harm reduction theory, harm reduction practice; the bio-psycho-social-spiritual model; stages of change; motivational interviewing: mean self-rated knowledge score was 2.6/5.

<sup>9</sup> University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

<sup>10</sup> Boyd 1999; Buchanan and Young 2001; Klee 2001; Poole and Isaac, 2001; Poole, 2000



- <sup>11</sup> This model will be discussed at greater length in recommendations at the end of the chapter.
- <sup>12</sup> Hwang and Cowger, 1998:31
- <sup>13</sup> Early, 2001; Gilgun, 1999; Graybeal, 2001; McQuaide and Ehrenreich, 1997
- <sup>14</sup> Early, 2001
- <sup>15</sup> Loman and Siegel, 2005; Lohrbach et al, 2005
- <sup>16</sup> see Greaves et al: 2002
- <sup>17</sup> see Boyd, 1999 and Boyd, 2004
- <sup>18</sup> Raheim, 2002
- <sup>19</sup> ibid 2002
- <sup>20</sup> ibid 2002
- <sup>21</sup> For an important discussion of shame and women, see Brown, Brene (2006), *Families in Society*, Vol. 87, No. 1
- <sup>22</sup> Templeton, Zohadi, Gaivani, & Velleman (2006)

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# Thinking Creatively About Strengths-Based Strategies

Irena Yashin-Shaw

*We are living in an era of unprecedented global change and knowledge proliferation. We need new ways of thinking about the challenges facing our global village. Thinking creatively about these challenges has the potential to strengthen individuals, communities and organisations. Creative thinking strategies can help people and leaders at all levels to use new approaches to existing challenges. Now more than ever we need conceptual tools to help us break free from the constraints of habitual thinking. In this session a new research based model for creative thinking is proposed. The StrateGEE<sup>®</sup> model provides an approach or framework to thinking creatively. It helps people to initiate and sustain the kind of thinking process that will yield creative and innovative responses to problems. The model identifies four different kinds of thinking used during creative problem-solving; mechanisms by which cognitive resources may be synergistically and creatively deployed; and ways of combining knowledge and thought processes to produce creative outcomes. Conceptual tools such as the StrateGEE<sup>®</sup> Model are useful aids or scaffolds for creative thinking by providing an heuristic approach to the creative problem-solving process.*

## Introduction

Research into creative thinking and creative problem-solving has received renewed interest with the advent of the knowledge economy. There is a considerable emphasis on corporate innovation brought about by accelerating competition and the application of new technologies. One characteristic of this current drive for innovation is the combining of disciplines and knowledge bases. "The combination of artistic and technical skills or of professional knowledge and interpersonal ability will be increasingly important to maximising the value of 'intellectual capital'" (Seltzer & Bentley, 1999:14). Conceptual tools and scaffolds that may aid this process of using knowledge resources synergistically could prove extremely useful for those faced with the challenge of producing creative solutions to either existing or new problems.

This paper presents one such conceptual tool called the *StrateGEE<sup>®</sup> model for Creative Problem-Solving*. It identifies four different kinds of thinking engaged in during creative problem-solving as well as explaining the mechanisms by which cognitive resources may be synergistically and creatively deployed and combined to produce creative outcomes. It incorporates some of the well known strategies used in creative problem-solving such as brainstorming, perspective-shifting and synthesising but adds to and goes beyond these to place them in a broader context. The model therefore is a **compilation of many strategies** designed to help with the generation of new ideas, as well as the exploration and evaluation of these ideas. It also incorporates the important role of strategic thinking which guides the whole process. Unlike some approaches to creative thinking which focus primarily on idea generation; this model scaffolds the **entire** problem-solving process from conceptualisation through to final outcome recognising the fact that if original ideas are to be valuable then they must also be applicable and useful.

## The nature of creative problem-solving

Creative problem-solving is by nature ill-defined. There is no single correct answer but rather a multitude of possibilities. Similarly there are no specific rules, algorithms or predetermined steps by which to proceed. Creative outcomes are more likely to result from breaking the rules rather than following them or using novel associations that produce unexpected results (Smith, 1995). Creative problems do not have right or wrong answers only better or worse. They evolve or emerge incrementally through a combination of factors (Butler and Kline, 1998).

Individuals engaged in solving problems requiring original outcomes gradually 'build-up' their responses by revisiting previous knowledge states. In well-defined problems, if the person revisits previous knowledge states after going down an unproductive path (ie. goes back to where they made a mistake in applying the rules) then "all that the subject knows is that the path just explored does not lead to the goal state. The problem-solver does not have an enriched understanding of the state he or she is returning to" (Goel and Pirolli, 1992, p.425). By contrast, in creative problem-solving, each subsequent application of cognitive resources, is enriched and informed by previous states allowing an incremental evolution (Weisberg, 1988). Creative problem-solving does not occur in discreet stages but rather creative products are built up gradually, as the creative problem-solver continually adjusts the emerging product towards its final form (Jay and Perkins, 1997). To do this, cognitive components must be able to be combined in various ways to allow this building up to occur. We shall see how this works in the following section.



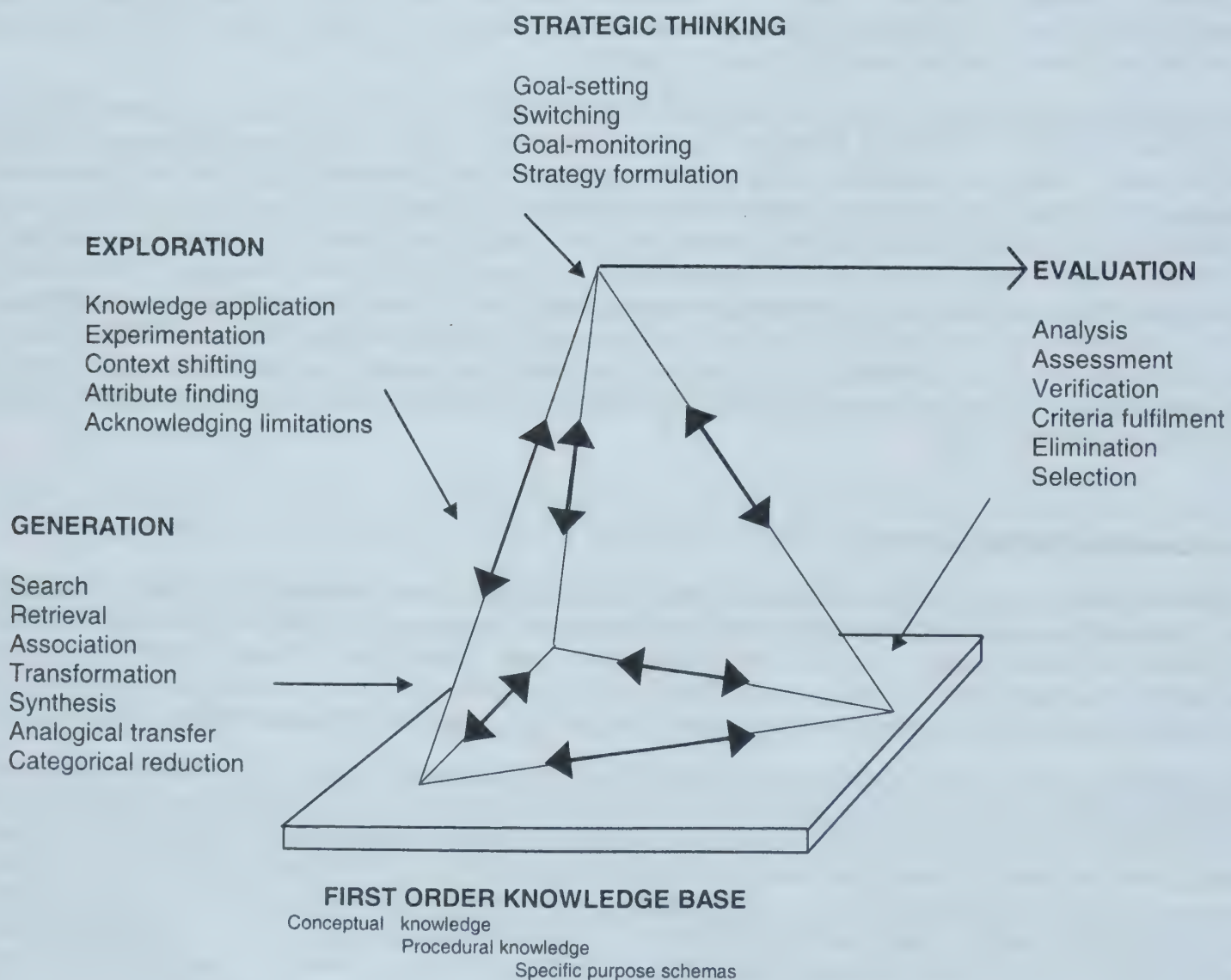
## The StrateGEE model for creative problem-solving

This model may be thought of as an 'heuristic' for creative thinking. An *heuristic* is a 'rule of thumb' method of tackling a problem which does not guarantee a particular outcome. In other words it provides a starting point and some signposts

The model is conceptualised as a hierarchy in keeping with the understanding of knowledge structures from the cognitive literature where higher level, general schemas act on or operate on lower level, specific ones (Anderson, 1982; Stevenson, 1991). Broadly defined, a schema may be considered to be an organised structure of knowledge consisting of a rich network of interconnected elements in memory (Marshall, 1995).

Without schemas, memory would be a vast collection of isolated facts, which would need to be combed through every time information was needed. In other words schemas help to organise memory by providing an efficient storage and retrieval mechanism. Schemas contain knowledge of both facts and skills which are connected in memory networks which aid in the retrieval and acquisition of knowledge (Glaser and Bassok, 1989). According to cognitive theory a person has different levels of schemas. That is why the model has been represented as a hierarchy.

The model also identifies a number of thought actions that are often associated with creative thinking. They are found in the box listing Generation strategies. Most people have at some stage or another engaged in brainstorming to help generate solutions to a problem. That's great, but what then? Many people usually identify brainstorming as a creative thinking strategy – which it is, but it is only one small part of the process if a genuinely useful outcome is to come about. For an idea to be useful it needs to be followed through and thought through to refinement. That is where the other boxes with the other thought actions become relevant. That is why this model which is a compilation of many strategies is such a useful scaffold. Lets have a look at the different aspects of the model more closely.



## The StrateGEE Model for Creative Thinking

### How does it work?

#### The platform

Let's start with the platform – the base on which everything else rests. This represents our knowledge base – everything we know. We've been accumulating knowledge and information our whole life. It is all locked away in



our long term memory somewhere. We know an ENORMOUS amount, much more than we realise. Think about what a complex task it is to drive a car. Remember how difficult it was as first? Now it is such a familiar activity that has become so automated that there is plenty of attention left to have a conversation while driving. But think about all the complex tasks that you do now with ease. What an enormous store of knowledge is locked away there. Often when it is locked away we can't access it simply because we just don't think of it or don't know how to access it. Wouldn't it be great if we could find a way of calling up that knowledge in the service of creativity and innovation?

One way that most people are familiar with is brainstorming. The knowledge in the Knowledge Base may be accessed by a conscious and systematic search or it may be preconsciously activated and called into active, working memory by way of its conceptual ties and associations to a concept being consciously utilised. Conceptual ties are the result of schema formation. Thus schemas are knowledge structures that enable individuals to relate concepts or procedures that are linked in some way within the knowledge base.

The important point here is that schemas are *active* memory structures in the sense that their structures are able to accommodate and integrate new information (Keller and Keller, 1996). Schemas are therefore constructed progressively as new information about interrelationships between objects, situations and events is assimilated. In this sense they are 'modifiable' and 'adaptive' (Gott, 1989) because they allow the integration and accommodation of new information and related experiences, by linking knowledge, both declarative and procedural (Gott, 1989), into increasingly coherent chunks of information. A progressively constructed schema would therefore be a structure which accommodated the organisation, connectedness and interrelationships among objects, situations and events. Thus schema acquisition is an active, constructive, and cumulative process occurring over time (Shuell, 1986).

It stands to reason therefore that the person who has a well stocked mind with knowledge and interest in a diverse variety of fields is likely to have a greater vocabulary out of which creative ideas may emerge. A number of studies has shown that creative people consistently describe themselves as having a wide range of interests. Edgar Allen Poe for example believed that his lasting fame would not be for his literary works but rather for his contributions to cosmological theory. Seltzer and Bentley (1999) argue that for success in an economy "defined by the innovative application of knowledge .....learners and workers must draw on the entire spectrum of learning experiences and apply what they have learned in new and creative ways" (p.9). The mechanisms by which knowledge may be combined in new creative ways for creative outcomes is discussed in the following sections.

### **The pyramid**

Directly interfacing with the knowledge base are the three categories of Generation, Exploration and Evaluation, characterised by sets of procedures, which access and operate on the knowledge and skills contained therein. *Procedures* are cognitive steps defined by the function they serve in the problem space. The procedures in these categories may be conceptualised as second order thinking for two reasons. Firstly they are consciously applied as part of the heuristic process of creative problem-solving and therefore constitute controlled cognitive activity. Secondly they operate on and utilise first order thinking and are therefore of a higher level. Existing knowledge and skills from the knowledge base provide the raw materials out of which a creative solution is constructed as a result of being operated on heuristically by second order procedures. Thinking at this level is characterised by high cognitive load because of the search for novelty. In the following sub-sections each of the categories of second order thinking and their procedures are examined in turn to illuminate their various roles in the process of creative problem solving followed by an explanation for the separation of the procedures into generic and domain-related procedures.

### **Generation**

*Generative procedures*, marshal the mental raw materials which promote creative thinking. Generation therefore is responsible for bringing new information problem space. As such it is akin to the commonly used term - *divergent thinking* which is viewed as an essential component of creative thinking. It may be defined as, the ability to make remote associations between topics (Mednick, 1962); an active search that can free information in memory from the context and cues with which it was remembered so that it can appear as a novel response to the problem (Brown, 1989); the promotion of unconventional possibilities, associations and interpretations (Guilford, 1968 in Finke, 1995); the development of tentative possibilities rather than data, speculation rather than conclusions. It is characterised by the tolerance of ambiguity, the ability to hold contradictory ideas simultaneously and the maintenance of flexible constructs (Dowd, 1989).

Examples of Generation procedures are :

- Search (Yashin-Shaw, 2001) -A seeking out of possibilities to inform or enrich current thinking.
- Retrieval (Finke et al, 1992)- A direct transference of specific concepts from the knowledge base into working memory for the purpose of expanding or illuminating the current problem.



- Association (Finke et al, 1992) - The mental connection of either disparate or related ideas, freed from their normal contexts.
- Contrast (Yashin-Shaw, 2001) - A juxtaposing or setting in opposition of two disparate concepts so as to enhance their differences for artistic, dramatic or other particular effect.
- Synthesis (Finke et al, 1992) - A combination or blending of two or more ideas or concepts.
- Analogical Transfer (Finke et al, 1992) - A correspondence and mapping between similar features of concepts and principles that are otherwise dissimilar.
- Categorical Reduction (Finke et al, 1992) - Simplifying a concept or image to its fundamental, basic form

The above procedures used in various combinations enable problem-solvers to retrieve, synthesise and metamorphose concepts, ideas and information in novel ways to enhance the potential for creative outcomes.

### **Exploration**

*Exploration* takes place during creative problem-solving as emergent features worthy of further exploitation and development are identified, extracted and manipulated. Exploratory activity is differentiated from generative activity in so far as it is more directed and organised and where possible outcomes are assembled from the information called up into the problem space.

Examples of Exploration procedures are :

- Knowledge application (Yashin-Shaw, 2001) - The application of specific knowledge, procedural or conceptual, in order to develop a particular idea.
- Context shifting (Finke et al, 1992) - The transference of the idea or concept being considered into a different context as a way of gaining insight.
- Attribute finding (Finke et al, 1992) - The search for emergent features and recognition of the developing characteristics of the product in progress.
- Acknowledging limitations (Finke et al, 1992) - Identifying real or possible constraints, shortcomings or difficulties of the emerging product.

It is the application of exploratory procedures which nurture inventive thoughts to fruition. Many creative ideas would never have been more than fanciful dreams if the problem-solver had not subsequently applied their knowledge to experiment with the new idea in various ways.

### **Evaluation**

Generation and exploration are often the kinds of thinking immediately associated with creative problem-solving, however of equal importance to creative outcomes is evaluation. *Evaluation* determines the value of emerging or developing creative ideas and helps to refine the final product. Without evaluation, product demands and constraints could never be accurately met. Failure to evaluate potential and existing solutions and developments during the creative process could also result in inadequate solutions being accepted or creative possibilities not being fully refined. Thus evaluation is an essential component of the creative process if a final product is to be achieved.

Examples of Evaluation procedures are :

- Analysis (Perkins 1981) - Critically examining, by focusing attention on a particular aspect of the solution, the strengths and weaknesses of an outcome, proposal or idea.
- Assessment (Amabile 1983) - To pass a qualified judgment on an idea, concept or outcome by stating its appropriateness, appeal, usefulness or value.
- Verification (Yashin-Shaw 2001) - Confirming and/or justifying a choice.
- Criteria fulfilment (Campbell 1960) - The extent to which the product or an idea meets, exhibits or illustrates the characteristics required in the final outcome, through the application of predetermined criteria, characterising acceptable solutions.
- Elimination (Yashin-Shaw 2001) - The considered rejection of an idea or outcome due to its perceived irrelevance, inappropriateness, uselessness or impracticality.
- Selection - (Yashin-Shaw, 2001) - The decision to retain and include particular ideas and concepts.
- Comparison (Perkins 1981) - The juxtaposition of ideas, concepts or products with the intention of ultimately choosing the most appropriate one or rejecting inappropriate ones.



Without evaluation, creative problem-solving would be severely frustrated, resulting in inferior solutions. The functions of evaluation are closely aligned with the popularly used term of *convergent thinking* which is commonly thought of as the opposite or complement of divergent thinking, concerned as it is with conclusions, deductions, and assessments (Dowd 1989). De Bono (1970) refers to this kind of thinking as vertical thinking because it is selective rather than generative, concerned with practicality rather than possibility and correctness rather than probability.

### **The apex**

The creative problem solving process is monitored by the highest order thinking which is strategic thinking. This function switches and combines the various kinds of thinking for the purpose of creating the desired outcomes. These thought actions allow thinkers to reflect critically on the appropriateness of selected strategies and concepts, employ different ones where necessary and monitor their progress while engaged in tasks (Scandura, 1981; Glaser, 1985). For this reason strategic thinking is placed at the apex of the model because its products are the goals, strategies and dialogue which inform, select and regulate the creative thinking process.

Examples of strategic thinking thought actions are:

- Goal setting (Evans 1991) - An explicit acknowledgment of the need to achieve some outcome or quality
- Switching (Stevenson 1991) - A conscious and intentional change in the direction of thinking
- Goal monitoring (Evans 1991) - A conscious intervention to ascertain the extent to which the thinking will lead to the desired outcomes
- Strategy formulation (Yashin-Shaw 2001) - A forward looking intermediate cognitive stepping stone which may lead to clearer intentions, goals and directions

The strategic thinking function is especially important during creative problem-solving because the conscious search for novelty and originality using existing schemas as building blocks in the heuristic process of producing creative outcomes poses a high cognitive load which requires more strategic cognitive management than the solving of a well-defined problem.

### **The arrows - Combining different kinds of thinking**

With creative problem solving we don't know what the final outcome will look like. So we can't go straight there. If you were given a long division problem you would know the rules to apply to get you to the right answer. And there would be only one right answer. But when you are thinking for creativity, your thinking jumps around all over the place. You may generate some new ideas, explore them for a while but then think you need some more new ideas to enrich the process so you go back to generating, every now and then you may evaluate an emerging solution before deciding that you need to explore it in a different way. The arrows represent the fact that thinking during creative problem solving switches among all the different thinking actions. This feature can be thought of as – thinking *interactively* and it happens throughout the *entire* problem-solving process. The arrows are there to remind us that it is good to *combine* the different kinds of thinking. Sure early in the process a creative thinker will do lots of generating; later in the process when a solution begins to emerge the thinker will naturally do more evaluating to ensure that the final outcome is useful and workable. But the thing to remember is to use as many of the cognitive actions as possible. The final product will be the richer for it.

This notion of cognitive interactivity is an important one for anyone wanting to create a novel response to a problem. By encouraging cognitive activity to shift freely among the categories of thinking and among the thought actions identified in the model then the final result is more likely to be novel and innovative.

### **Conclusion**

The *StrateGEE*<sup>®</sup> model for creative problem-solving presented in this paper has the potential to provide a valuable conceptual tool by which individuals during creative problem-solving in ill-defined domains may maximise the utilisation of knowledge assets by:-

1. The deployment of knowledge from disparate and diverse locations from within the knowledge base for creative problem-solving.
2. The identification of various cognitive thought actions which may be utilised in creative problem-solving.
3. The identification of a mechanism for combining different kinds of thinking so that cognitive resources may be interactively deployed.

The model thereby provides a conceptualisation that can both scaffold novice creative thinkers and extend those more experienced, while also providing a mechanism for identifying and managing different kinds of knowledge and thinking.



Given that we live in an age which encourages the combining of disciplines, the application of knowledge and skills across contexts and the synthesis of new knowledge with existing (Seltzer & Bentley 1999), a model which illuminates and facilitates such processes can be extremely useful.

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# Generating Transformative Experiences in a Corporation through an Innovative OD Approach

B. Sudhakar & V.N. Kantharao

*The following is an account of 3 years journey of two change agents representing inside and outside practitioners, in the context of challenges of a corporate entity that was at the outset of a decline.*

*The approach is based on leveraging and complementing the capabilities of internal change agent in the HR function and an external change agent in successfully transforming the organisation.*

## Key beliefs

Deriving the strength from Rogerian humanistic psychology, it is believed that more than the technology of change, skill of change agent in 'being' a change initiator will bring out the best in others. It is this 'quality of being' of the person that enables to see the 'strengths' in other person/s or client/s.

It is with this orientation that we both (as insider and outsider to the organization) have felt it appropriate to share the following key constructs as critical in our efforts to bring organization wide transformation.

### a. Value orientation

We believe that our own value orientation as individuals has been quite instrumental in the way we have been able to work together and also quite instrumental in the making of our choices of the kind of interventions we may embark upon.

Conviction in ourselves :

Courage in our own convictions mattered a lot, namely our unstinted belief in the power of human potential and at the same time faith in the inherent capacity of the client system to grow & develop. Whenever occasions arose wherein these beliefs were challenged it was our courage of conviction that helped us to keep going and not to give up.

### b. Sense of Purpose

We both believe that as an agent of change if we don't have clarity of our Life goals, it is easy for us to get distracted. We realized that this sense of purpose was our main source of energy, to withstand some of the most testing times. It also helped us to communicate our own stakes with conviction to the client system. It also helped in clarifying to the client system why we were doing what we were doing.

### c. Congruence

We realised that congruence in our thoughts, statements, and actions was very cardinal. Specially when we are working with the same client/s system over a period of time and constantly responding to various situations with the client it is imperative that we ask ourselves how often have we been authentic, spontaneous and genuine consistently.

### d. Belief in the power of experiential methodology

Our growth as professionals has happened in the tradition of human process orientation more so in the experiential learning methods. Also most of our change or growth as professionals is an outcome of this kind of experiential learning. We also believed that adult learning takes place through experiential learning. And this kind of belief reinforced our own commitment to democratic principles.

## Uniqueness in practice

Some key success factors for the achievement of the transformation agenda are as under:

1. Trust level between Internal & External facilitators.
2. Complementary skills between internal and external change agents.
3. Common belief in 'unleashing potential'



4. Creating critical mass of people in the client organization by ensuring the same target group of employees goes through the journey.
5. Holistic & organic approach
6. Thrust on integration of client's experiences in the process of change.
7. Synchronizing offsite & on site learning interventions.
8. Involvement and ownership in unfolding various planned interventions.
9. Having over all road map, which was collectively evolved by the leadership group.

Focus of intervention cum impact grid/ model :

Self	Enhanced self-awareness. Initiating the journey of personal growth & development	Exploring one's own purpose	Triggering urge for excellence	Appreciating ones own competitive & collaborative propensities.
Interpersonal	Redefining workplace equations	Introspective appreciation of self & family. Exploring & valuing interpersonal effectiveness	Becoming aware of one's affiliation motive strength and its implications.	Mapping one's own socio metric equations with in work group and ways to improve the same.
Group	Valuing & practicing interdependence	Assuming the role of change agent at work place, through modeling.	Perceiving one's role as complimenting reality & demonstrating collaborative working.	Consciously assuming active role in cross functional work groups
Organization	Conscious practice of people process sensitivity at leadership levels across the organisation.	Alignment of leadership behavior with Vision, Mission Values (VMV) & Tata leadership practices.	Collective exploration of leadership team dynamics and instituting OBF forums at SBU's	Active engagement & practice of people development systems & processes

#### Last 3 years reported impact

- People have reported that these interventions have made difference in the following spheres.
  - Self level awareness & enhanced urge to actualize
  - Self and family relationships
  - Relations at work place
  - Renewed energy levels at work
  - Appreciation of big picture
  - Willingness to take up challenges
  - Willingness to change
  - Change in the over all approach to work/org
  - Keenness to improve competencies.
  - Focus towards one's Life goals & career objectives
  - Enhanced networking
  - Appreciation for collaboration & mutuality
  - Alignment and super ordination with the organisation



### **Business level impacts (a glimpse)**

- Total turnaround of business
- Achievement of intended outcomes of organizational initiatives.
- Market capitalization enhancing multi fold
- Continual progression in the rating of Tata Business Excellence Model (built on Malcom Baldrige Pmodel)
- Growth from Indian company into Global organization
- Third largest player in Soda ash

### **Organizational climate shifts**

- Control dependency to achievement
- Avoidance to risk taking
- Feudal to participative
- Silo orientation to cross functional
- Individual to collective orientation
- Indifference to 'taking charge'
- Externalizing to Internalizing



# Strength Based HRD Audit as an OD Intervention

T. V. Rao

## Why HRD Audit?

In the last 25 years a large number of corporations have established Human Resources Development Departments, introduced new systems of HRD, and made structural changes in terms of differentiating the HRD function and integrating it with HR function. A good number of CEOs saw a hope in HRD for most of their problems, issues and challenges. HR systems are people intensive and require a lot of managerial time. There are examples of corporations where HRD has taken a driver's seat and has given a lot of benefits. In to-days competitive world, "people" or employees can give a good degree of competitive advantage to the company. To get the best out of HR, there should be a good alignment of the function, its strategies, structure, systems, and styles with business and its goals (financial, customer etc. parameters). It should be aligned both with the short-term goals and long term strategies. If it is not aligned, HR could become a big liability to corporations. Besides this alignment, the skills and styles of HR staff, the line managers and the top management should synergise with the HR goals and strategies. HRD audit is an attempt to assess these alignments and ensure the same.

**HRD audit is a comprehensive evaluation of the current human resource development strategies, structure, systems, styles and skills in the context of the short and long-term business plans of a company. HRD audit attempts to find out the future HRD needs of the company after assessing the current HRD activities and inputs available.**

**Strength Based HRD audit is a systematic evaluation of the existing HRD strengths in terms of systems, competencies, structure, processes, practices, and culture with a view o build on what exists to what does not exists and add new strengths to a on-going organization. It uses the same techniques and methodology as HRD Audit with the main difference in perspective. It plays down what is lacking, builds on what is available. It treats what is not there as an opportunity and builds new strengths to utilize the opportunities.**

In this paper an attempt is made to first outline HRD Audit with its details and at the end some perspectives for strength based HRD audit are drawn.

In the last few years Dr. T. V. Rao along with his colleague Dr. Udai Pareek pioneered in India, a methodology for auditing HRD function and implemented the same in a good number of Indian companies.

## Methodology

A team of auditors visit the corporation and using a variety of methodologies assess the appropriateness and adequacy of the various HRD systems, strategies, structures, competencies, culture, processes etc. The methodology used include:

- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Observation
- Secondary data analysis
- And Examination of documents and communications

The audit starts with a brief by the CEO and the Chief of HR who may set an agenda and focal areas of evaluation. The interview with the top management starts with finding out details of the future plans of the organizations and uses it as a base for outlining the competency requirements of the organization. The current competencies, structures, HRD systems etc. are assessed in terms of their capability to prepare the organization for the future. Suggestions are made to improve for achieving the future business goals and plans. The HRD audit is contextual and at the same time uses the available knowledge of the potential of the HRD systems in helping the corporation achieve its goals.

## HRD Score cards

On the basis of HRD audit a Score is assigned to the company which indicates the level of HRD in relation to four dimensions. HRD Systems Maturity, HRD Competencies (including the competencies of line managers, union leaders, top management and the HRD department and its structure), HRD styles and culture, and Business linkages of HRD. The score card is a form of rating of the level of maturity of HRD in the company.



## Concepts of HRD Audit

### **HRD Audit is Comprehensive**

HRD audit starts with an understanding of the future business plans and corporate strategies. While HRD audit can be done even in organizations that lack well formulated future plans and strategies, it is most effective as a tool when the organization already has such long-term plans. The HRD audit starts with attempts to answer the following questions:

☞ **Where does the company want to be ten years from now, three years from now and one year from now? (Answers to this question ensures business linkages part of the HRD score card)**

The answer to this question needs to be provided by the top-level management. If there are long-term plan documents these are reviewed. On the basis of the answers to these questions the consultants finalize the subsequent audit strategies and methodology. The consultants make an attempt to identify the nature of core competencies the organization needs to develop in order to achieve its long-term five to ten year plans. The consultants also attempt to identify skills required to be developed by the company at various levels (example, workmen level, supervisors level, junior management level, middle management level, top management level, etc.) and with respect to various functions (finance, production, marketing, etc.). Listing all these core competencies and skills for the future is the starting point of HRD audit. The HRD audit normally attempts to assess the existing skills and the competency gaps in order to achieve the long-term business goals and short term results of the company. The competencies may deal with technical aspects, managerial aspects, and people related or conceptual. They may cover knowledge base, attitudes, values and skills.

☞ **What is the current skill base of HRD staff in the company in relation to various roles and role requirements? (HRD Competencies Score on the HRD score card)**

This is assessed through an examination of the qualifications of HRD staff, job descriptions, training programs attended, etc. Besides this, through interviews an attempt is normally made to identify the skill gap in the organization. Training needs and performance appraisal forms provide further insights. Departmental heads and other employees provide insights into the competency and other skill requirements.

☞ **What are the HRD sub-systems available today to help the organization build itself competency base for the present, immediate future as well as for long term goals? (HRD systems maturity score of the HRD score card)**

The auditors attempt to identify various HRD sub-systems that are available to ensure the availability, utilization and development of skills and other competencies in the company. These HRD sub-systems evaluated and the framework are presented in Chapter 2. All the HRD tools existing in the organization are listed and studied in detail.

☞ **What is the current level of effectiveness of these systems in developing people and ensuring that human competencies are available in adequate levels in the company? (HRD systems maturity on the HRD score card)**

Assessing the effectiveness of each system makes this. For example, the effectiveness of performance appraisal system is assessed by discussing with employees, individually and in-groups, about the efficacy of the system. The auditors look at the appraisal forms, look at the linkages between appraisal and training, conduct questionnaire surveys to assess the extent to which coaching and other components of other appraisals are being utilized and also conduct workshops if necessary to assess the effectiveness of these systems. Similarly, in relation to induction training, the consultants make it a point to meet those who have been through the induction training recently or those who are in the process of being inducted into the company and take their views to improve the induction training methodology etc.

☞ **Is the HRD structure existing in the company adequate enough to manage the HRD in the company? (Contributes to HRD competencies score)**

In the next stage, an attempt is made by the auditors or consultants to examine whether the HRD structure at present can handle the pressing and future HRD needs of the company. This examination will assess the existing skill base of the HRD staff of the company, their professional preparation, their attitudes, their values, their developmental needs, the line



managers perceptions regarding them, etc. In addition to examining the full time staff, the HRD structure is also assessed in terms of use of task forces and other mechanisms.

**Are the top management and senior manager styles of managing people in tune with the learning culture? (answers to these questions contribute to the HRD culture score of the HRD score card)**

Here an attempt is made to examine the leadership styles, human relations' skills, etc. of senior managers. The extents to which their styles facilitate the creation of a learning environment are examined.

### **HRD Audit Examines Linkages with Other Systems**

The HRD audit also examines the linkages between HRD and other systems like total quality management, personnel policies, strategic planning etc.

Suggestions are made on the basis of evaluation on the above questions about the future HRD strategies required by the company, the structure the company needs to have for developing new competencies and the systems that need to be strengthened, the styles and culture that has compatibility with HRD processes in the company particularly the styles of the top management, etc.

### **HRD Audit is Business driven**

HRD audit always keeps the business goals always on focus. At the same time, it attempts to bring in professionalism in HRD. In keeping the business focus at the center, HRD audit attempts to evaluate HRD strategy, structure, system, staff, skills and styles and their appropriateness.

*HRD Audit is not a problem solving exercise. It may not be able to provide any solutions to specific problems the organizations is facing - for example Industrial Relations problem, or discipline problem, poor performance problems etc. However, it may be able to throw insights into the sources for the problem. It will not give feedback about specific individuals. It will however give feedback about the HRD department, its structure, competency levels, leadership, processes, influence of the HRD on the other systems etc. HRD audit is against the HRD framework*

### **HRD Audit as an OD intervention**

Perhaps India is the first country to formally establish a totally dedicated HRD (Human Resources development) Department separated from the Personnel Department. This was designed in the year 1974 when the term HRD itself was not very popular in the USA. Two consultants from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad after reviewing the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system and training in Larsen & Toubro recommended an Integrated HR System to be established and the department dealing with development issues be separated out from the personnel department and be called the HRD department. Thus the first HRD department was established. The State Bank of India and its Associates to start a series of new HRD departments followed it in the banking sector. By late seventies the concept of HRD and the need for having separate HRD departments picked up momentum. In Pareek and Rao's model of HRD department the objective of this department is to facilitate learning and change in the organizations. This department is supposed to have learning specialists who facilitate change process. In their model, OD was conceived as one of the main tasks of the HRD department. Thus an attempt was made to institutionalize OD through HRD departments. As the departments picked up momentum a lot of OD work had begun to be done through the HRD departments. Infact most change interventions have been and are being made by the HRD departments (as differentiated from the Personnel departments). The HRD Managers in India do undertake a number of interventions, which may be classified as OD interventions. The nature of interventions undertaken by the HRD departments include:

- Cultural change through new performance management systems
- TQM based interventions (in most cases these are undertaken also by a separate group of professionals)
- Survey Feedback
- Role clarity and Role negotiation exercises
- Training
- Career Planning and Succession exercise



- Assessment Centers and promotion policies
- Visioning and value clarification exercises
- Performance coaching workshops
- Team building interventions

The Academy of Human Resources Development has come up with a concept of IOAC (Individual and Organizational Assessment Center) which is becoming popular as an intervention by the HRD departments. In this concept the HRD department establishes an Assessment Center with the purposes of assessing and developing the competencies of Individuals as Individuals. Individuals in relation to their current and future Roles, Dyadic relationships, teams, Inter-team collaboration and work and Organizational Climate and Synergy.

### Experiences from Some Organizations

A great deal of work has been done in India regarding the use of HRD Audit as an OD intervention and is a unique feature of Indian organizations. The author's experience in initiating OD with the aid of HRD audit has shown the following results:

1. The audit in several organizations resulted in establishing several organizational systems and processes such as potential & performance appraisal, career planning, training, mentoring. Performance appraisal and job rotation are the two most frequently affected changes.
2. In a few companies it has resulted in the formulation of clear-cut policies including promotion policy, communication policy, reward and recognition policy, etc.
3. In others it seemed to have drawn their attention to issues like developing trust, collaboration, teamwork, quality orientation etc.
4. In a few others it has resulted in more role clarity and direction to the employees in terms of their work leading to higher level of role efficacy
5. In one of the organizations, as the audit started with the issues of future strategies the top management team could not identify the future plans. They indicated that the plans come from the multinational Head Office and they have no freedom in influencing the same. The turnover from Indian operations was negligible and therefore the parent office paid little attention to the corporation. AS A RESULT THE TOP MANAGEMENT COULD NOT COMMUNICATE THE FUTURE OF THE ORGANISATION CLEARLY TO THE EMPLOYEES. This resulted in morale and motivation issues though of not a significant magnitude. The corporation has good practices and the employees were proud.
6. On the basis of the HRD Audit report, which indicated the difficulties in ensuring employee commitment without an appreciation of the future plans of the company, the top management team made it a point to negotiate and plan the future strategy and plans for the company.
7. In another company the HRD Audit indicated the need for developing locals as HRD Managers and the need for reorienting the HRD systems to local culture. The company recruited an HRD manager as a short-term basis who designed a number of HR systems and also trained the local line managers in HRD. The systems designed were integrated into the TPM, ISO 9000 and such other interventions.

### Results of a Research Study

Jomon (1997) conducted a research study to identify the factors influencing the use of audit as a change tool. He studied four organizations that have got them audited. They were studied about three years after the first audit. He tried to assess the influence of the following variables in the effective use of HRD Audit:

- Management styles
- Organizational characteristics
- Profile of the HRD Department
- Competency levels of HRD department
- CEO commitment
- HRD Chief's commitment



Jomon's study indicated the following in each of the four companies:

#### **Post Audit Scenario Organization 1:**

Soon after the Audit, the management held a number of meetings and a final action plan was formulated. Though the action plan covered HRD at the policy making level, at the operational and departmental level and contained a joint action plan for the HRD-Training department, the report as well as the plan were kept confidential. The following changes were brought about as a result of the Audit exercise:

1. *A well-established system to assess the potential of higher level people based on key competencies.*
2. *Promotion policy is now shared with everyone*
3. *Each employee is aware of his career path*
4. *Mechanisms to help employees plan their work efficiently have been set up and employees are helped by their supervising officers to plan their work effectively.*
5. *Employees now go for training with a clear understanding of the Knowledge and skills they are expected to acquire from training.*
6. *Regular circulars and notices and bulletins give adequate information to the employees about the Company, the market situation, the changes in the environment etc.*

#### **Post audit Scenario Company 2:**

This company has come a long way since 1994 when the audit was conducted. The situation in 1997 was:

1. *Clear Personnel Policies including Promotions Policy, Communication Policy, Reward and Recognition Policy and many more.*
2. *Team Spirit at this company is of a high order as conveyed by the employees themselves.*
3. *PPRD Systems have been revamped. A well-structured feedback mechanism is in place now.*
4. *KPA's provide role clarity and direction to the employees in terms of their work and Role Clarity is very high among employees.*
5. *External training programs are chosen carefully after collecting enough information about their Quality and Suitability.*
6. *Action Oriented Research is very well established and taken seriously and acted upon.*

#### **Post Audit scenario:**

The first audit was conducted in 1993. A management Council meeting was organized to discuss the Strengths, Weaknesses and the Recommendations of the Audit. Strategic issues related to HRD were also considered at this juncture. The status in 1997 is presented below:

1. *Man Power requirements for each department are identified well in advance*
2. *Key Competencies have been identified and a system is in place for assessing the potential of people for higher level responsibilities.*
3. *Employees also participate and contribute to annual performance plans*
4. *KPA's provide Role Clarity & direction to the employees in terms of their work*
5. *A very high level of Role Efficacy as stated by the employees themselves*
6. *OD initiatives, Research orientation, Communication, Empowerment & Reward systems are yet to be established.*
7. *The HRD Staff though inadequate in number was considered highly competent.*



#### **Company 4:**

In this company some of the weaknesses highlighted by the Audit were:

1. *No Potential Appraisal system and an ad hoc performance appraisal system*
2. *No career planning system*
3. *Lack of role clarity*
4. *Poor induction procedure*
5. *Absence of mentoring*
6. *High confusion and friction in values and approach*
7. *Lack of initiative and a mechanical approach to work*
8. *Human orientation was missing*
9. *Operators were treated badly*
10. *Personnel policies were not Development oriented but discipline oriented.*

Once the HRD Audit report was submitted, the HR Chief called all the managerial staff for dinner and presented the findings. Based on the discussions an action plan was drawn up which after implementation brought about the following changes:

1. *A well established Potential appraisal system and a systematic performance appraisal system*
2. *Career planning is done upto the executive level*
3. *Role Clarity brought about through identification of KPA's*
4. *Systematic Induction and Training Program has been established*
5. *Initiation of mentoring*
6. *An increase in the level of Trust among employees*
7. *High involvement of employees at all levels*
8. *Human Orientation injected into the business process with opportunities for growth and development provided to all employees*
9. *Empowerment of operators through various mechanisms, and efforts made towards improving management-operator relationship.*
10. *Integration of all HR related activities, which now support developmental activities.*

#### **Findings of the Study by Jomon (1998)**

1. There is a direct relationship between the CEO's commitment towards HRD and the effectiveness of the HRD function.
2. An interesting revelation was that in all four organizations, the CEO was rated higher than the HRD Chief in commitment towards HRD. The reason for this could be that many communications announcing new ideas, the CEO signed practices & systems to be put into effect. This also ensured a greater acceptability by the members of the organization.
3. There is however a direct relationship between the ratings of the HRD Chief in commitment towards HRD and the effectiveness of the HR function.
4. Management styles also show a high degree of equivalence with HR Effectiveness. Companies scoring high on the average best management styles had more effective HR systems. These Companies had a dominant participative style with a backup Professional or organic style. An Altruistic management style was seen to have an adverse effect on the effectiveness of the HR function.
5. As far as Organizational Characteristics are concerned, the following organizations were able to embrace change and utilize the HRD Audit inputs better, leading to a more effective HR Function



- a. Middle aged organization (Est. between 1970-1990) as compared to old or young organizations.
  - b. Professionally run private organizations as compared to family owned organizations or closely held MNC's.
  - c. Service companies as compared to their Manufacturing counterparts.
  - d. Organizations with a flat structure as compared to those hierarchical in nature.
  - e. Medium sized organizations (with 20-40 Departments and between 1000 to 2000 employees) as compared to that very large or very small.
  - f. Organizations with a good employee profile the criteria for which is as given below:
6. Managerial Profile: Majority of managers is professionally qualified, average age between 30-40, and more than eight years of work experience.
  7. Support Staff Profile: Majority of the support staff is secretarial certificate holders, average age between 35-45, and above 10 years of work experience.
  8. Worker Profile: Majority are skilled, with above 10 years of work experience, and average age between 35-45 years.
    - a. Organizations where management systems were in the process of being setup as compared to those with a well-established management system.
    - b. Organizations with participative and proactive unions undertaking developmental activities had better HRD Practices for Workers.
    - c. Organizations with employee development budgets as compared to those with no such allocation.

However, the following organizational characteristics did not seem to have any relation to the utilization of the Audit inputs or the effectiveness of the HR Function.

- a. Market Positioning
  - b. Tendency of groupism among employees.
  - c. Linkage with Industries.
  - d. Collaborations with Institutions &
  - e. Social Responsibility.
9. In the organizations with the following HRD Department Profile, the Utilization of the Audit inputs and the resultant effectiveness of the HR Department were far better.
    - a. Department age of 7-10 years as compared to those greater than 10 years old and less than 7 years old.
    - b. A separate and independent HRD function and a separate HRD Department as compared to those with departments combined with other functions such as personnel.
    - c. HRD Department was structurally positioned at a higher level, headed by a Vice President (HRD).
    - d. A flat structure of the HRD Department as compared to a hierarchical structure in the HRD Department.
    - e. Decentralized HRD Department with HRD being considered a line function and involvement of line managers in the implementation of HRD.
    - f. Adequate HRD staff (i.e. around 10% of total number of managers in the Organization.) as compared to having insufficient or the bare minimum number of staff.
    - g. Average age of the HRD Staff between 30-40 years was considered good and facilitated better utilization of HRD Audit inputs. The age of the HRD Chief was also found to influence HRD Effectiveness. A Company where the HRD Chief was young (33 years) had accepted changes better.
    - h. A good professional profile with most of the staff having a professional qualification in HR and a behavioral science background.
    - i. An experienced HRD Staff with many of them having 10 or more years of work experience.



- j. HRD Staff who were high on initiative, were hardworking and spent extra time at the department ensured a better utilization of the HRD Audit inputs.
  - k. HRD Staff was members of professional bodies and undertook research activities independently.
10. The Organizations with a highly competent HRD Staff were able to derive much more benefit from the Audit Process resulting in a higher impact on the effectiveness of the HR Function.
- Infact in one Company though the HRD Department was small and inadequately staffed the utilization of HRD Audit and its effectiveness on HRD Practices was high mainly due to the high competency level of the HRD Staff.

#### **Post Audit Implementation Experiences: Experiences of Consultant Joining as Implementer**

In another set of organizations one in India and another in Egypt HRD audit resulted in the top management recognising the need to drive HRD in a systematic way and further resulted in the organizations employing dedicated HRD specialists who in turn managed change. M. G. Jomon who also worked with these two companies and assisted in implementing HRD audit reports his experiences as follows:

#### **HRD AUDIT IMPLEMENTATION: MULTINATIONAL COMPANY ABROAD**

##### **- A Report from Jomon**

(Source: Effectiveness of HRD Audit as an OD Intervention by M. G. Jomon, Unpublished Manuscript, XIM, Bhubaneswar, 2004)

**HRD audit inputs:** After a successful HRD audit by Dr. TV Rao and Raju Rao of TVRLS from April 2-8, 1999, HRD audit inputs were given to make the organization a world-class organization. The audit recognized the company's efforts in creating a number of records within a short time. Human Resource utilization has been very high and this has helped the organization to perform well. The competency requirements are likely to be changed in the future because of the expansion plans, competitive environment and the changing business scenario. The audit revealed that HRD has not received much attention in the past. Therefore creating systems, adopting professional work methods, developing a learning environment and making available local managerial talent to manage the future requirements and creating a performance driven culture are the challenges for the future.

The audit recommended developing appropriate HRD and OD systems to meet the above mentioned challenges. They include Performance Management Systems, Culture Building systems, Training systems, Career and succession development systems, developing empowering and Institution Building Leadership styles. In all these there should be a balanced focus of three aspects- Competence building, culture building, and commitment/motivation building. Some of the specific inputs are:

- Develop HRD philosophy and values based on national culture.
- Expatriates need to develop good work culture.
- Induction systems need to be initiated.
- Performance appraisal system should be redesigned to focus on performance management.
- The top management and all the expatriates need to go through a 360-degree feedback program.
- Training needs to be streamlined. It should go beyond TPM and focus on competence building, commitment building and culture building.
- Line managers should be trained in basics of HRD and their role in HRD.
- Succession plans need to be developed for key and senior roles.
- Promotion policies should be made explicit and transparent.
- HRD department should be strengthened with professionally qualified and trained personnel.
- HRD department should be separated from personnel and administration.



- A taskforce may be formed to implement the same.

## **Implementation**

The author of this report M. G. Jomon joined the organization as an external consultant in September 1999 and implemented the various HRD and OD initiatives as given below:

**The initial study of the organization:** It was important for the author to understand the organization in the light of the base line data. In-depth interviews with people from all levels were conducted to have a full grasp of the organizational realities. During this phase the interviewer also made an effort to put the data and findings of the HRD audit into perspectives. A number of findings were also validated during this phase.

### **Implementation bodies:**

The author was assisted by two bodies to implement the HRD audit inputs

**The implementation committee:** It was a 15-member decision-making committee represented from all the functions. It is headed by the Joint-President. It meets once in every week.

**The task force:** The six-member task force meets everyday and actually carries out all the activities in collaboration with the functional and departmental heads. The head of the HRD department was the coordinator of the task force.

With the help of the above implementation bodies following interventions were implemented:

### **Organizational Development (Od) Interventions**

1. Vision and mission statements were developed, manual prepared and the same was disseminated through pocket cards, displays at factory premises and at offices.
2. OD Department was established headed by a vice-president. The department has three-dimensional approach of systems development, overall plant improvement and development of all the processes in the organization
3. Rationalization of the organizational structure was done to make the organization functional oriented and flatter. The total hierarchy starting from the Managing Director to the operator was restricted to six.
4. Organizational roles were rationalized, listed and defined.
5. Man power rationalization was also done people were spared to join the OD department
6. Role interventions: Role analyses were conducted and job description for each and every role was worked out.
7. Competency mapping was done taking into account each and every role. As a result, specific competencies required for every role in the organization are available.
8. A role directory is prepared and made available with all the information relating to the roles in the organization.
9. Training interventions: Various training inputs were given by the author on all the interventions for the top management, line managers and for the internal trainers.
10. Knowledge Management Centre was started for acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. A very good library is also being developed.

### **Designing and Implementing HRD Systems**

The following HRD systems were designed and implemented. All the systems have their own manual and procedures.



1. The performance management systems
2. Recruitment system
3. Induction system and Mentor system
4. Implementaion issues

In this organization all the employees starting from the Managing Director was involved and contributed. Each and every implementation was done after discussion and debate. However, the top management had to change a number of things, which they were not prepared to do so. This discouraged the implementation committee and the task force. For example for any system to function properly delegation has to be done. But for this seniors were not prepared.

### **Hrd Audit Implementation as an HRD Functionary**

The author joined the organization as an HRD manager. On his joining he was told that his mandate was to move the company from an IR driven company to that of HRD driven.

TV Rao and Raju Rao TVRLS Ahmedabad conducted the HRD during the year 2000 and gave a number of HRD audit inputs as summarized below:

- HRD need to be made business driven and all HR activities should be viewed from this angle
- Production and productivity should be improved.
- This should not be restricted to unions and their settlement
- Manpower utilization should be improved Discipline and accountability should be achieved through performance management
- Strengthen the work culture through education, training and small group activities
- Multi skilling need be achieved
- Performance Management System need to be implemented
- Training need be done systematically
- HRD competencies need to be developed among HR personnel. Current staff and not qualified.
- Line mangers need to be trained in HRD
- Union leaders to be exposed to HRD
- Culture change need to be inculcated for firmness, accountability, cost consciousness, quality orientation and commitment towards the organization.
- Personnel policies should not be changed in haste

### **HRD audit implementation**

- Two HR professionals were inducted
- HRD initiative incorporated in the monthly MIS report
- Knowledge Management programmes started through programmes like book presentation, quiz programmes etc.
- Training system designed and implanted. Training is a thrust area.
- Plant Heads letter send to employees' residence as regular communication tool
- Company newsletter started
- Small group activities initiated
- Task forces formed across the plant help employees with problems like absenteeism
- Mentoring and counselling initiatives started



- Various programmes for employees' children conducted during vacation.

### **HRD Audit Failures**

There are at least two cases of HRD Audit not resulting in anything. The HRD Manager was very enthusiastic in getting the HRD audited. The Audit report indicated a very poor state of HRD in the company. The staff competencies were rated as poor, the practices questioned and improvements suggested. The Benchmarking data also indicated this company to be one of the poor performers in terms of HRD though in terms of the profits etc. the company was in the forefront and was facing competition. Though the audit started with an interview with the CEO, no opportunity was provided to the Auditors to make a presentation to the CEO. As a result the audit report did not receive any attention and the auditors considered the effort a waste.

In another company, the top management commissioned the Audit but got busy with reorganization of one of their critical marketing functions. In the process and due to market competition all the energies of the top management and their HR staff got diverted to the new organizational structure and they did not even have an opportunity to know the findings of the Audit. The auditors felt that some of the audit findings directly relate to business improvements in terms of the very reorganization they were planning. But the auditors were not in a position to draw the attention of the top management. The effort did not result in any thing.

These two events make it clear that the following processes in the HRD Audit have potential in initiating and managing change:

- Initial interviews with the Top management
- Bench Marking data on HRD Audit questionnaire supplied to the company
- Presentation by the Auditors at the end of the audit
- The report itself and the way the report is handled.

### **Summary and Conclusions:**

HRD audit is not intended to be originally an OD tool. By virtue of its diagnostic and participative methodology it seems to work as a change management tool. The interview methodology, its comprehensiveness, the audit methodology insisting on starting and ending with top management involvement all have high potential for initiating change processes. It could be further refined as an OD tool. It involves all the HRD staff and a large number of Managers in the audit process and makes them conscious of the areas needing improvements.

### **Strength Based HRD Audit (SBHRD-A)**

Given this potential of HRD Audit how do we make it strength based. The following is a conceptualisation for strength based HRD Audit:

#### **Assumptions:**

1. Every organization some form of HRD or the other. Organizations are reasonably sensible enough to initiate and promote systems and practices that are appropriate for them at a given point of time.
2. Most HRD interventions have evolved on the basis of the thinking and the necessity of the owners, promoters or trustees.
3. The current HRD interventions are the bare minimum that are required and have been appropriate up the current situation.
4. The current practices have enough strength that enabled them to sustain and improve the organization.
5. Any change has to be built on the existing strengths
6. It is the job of the auditor to find out the strengths of the current systems, practices and build the future on the basis of the same.
7. By focussing on the weaknesses the auditor may induct defences which may be not so functional in change management.



8. All employees contribute to the audit in some form or the other.
9. Seeing weaknesses in the current practices and bringing them out is seen as a strength and not a weakness.

### **Methodology for Strengths Based HRD Audit (SBHRD-A)**

The methodology of SBHRD-A is similar to the HRD audit described above. The principal difference is in underplaying the weaknesses and playing on the strengths this mean that all evaluation aims at looking for what exists and taking what exists as a positive strengths. Using the positive strengths deciding the next steps so as to create more strength in short period of time. Rather than making ambitious plans it evolves action steps for change in the next few weeks to months. The following are the thoughts of the author on designing and implementing strengths based HRD Audit. These could be treated as the proposed tenets of the SBHRD-A.

- Strengths based HRD audit also focuses on line managers as change agents rather than HRD department as change agent.
- It shifts the ownership of the audit intervention to the line managers. The HRD Manager works closely with the auditors. The auditors could be an internal team or an external consultant's ora combination of both.
- The strengths based HRD audit starts with first building on the strengths of the auditors.
- The auditors place on table their own strengths and articulate the same.
- The strengths of than auditors are then enhanced if necessary through study and benchmarking visits.
- It is only after the audit team is ready to audit they start the audit. The strengths of the auditors are circulated to all the members. The participation of all employees is ensured in the audit process.
- The reports are presented in stages to groups of employees as the auditors gather the data and feedback is used as means of evolving implementable plans.
- Strengths based HRD audit starts with the system that re strong in the company and builds on them than focussing on what is lacking. For example any form of PMS could be taken as strengths including the lack of system. The auditors extensively debate and discuss the strong points in the current state and build to improve rather than criticise the current state for improvement.

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# Making Appraisal Systems Work

Uma Sreedhar

*Does your Appraisal System Work? Can Appraisal System work as a method of retaining human power and work as a strategy for building culture?*

*Each year, employees and their immediate bosses enter into an elaborate gaming exercise called the annual performance appraisal. Most of it is form filling, and yet every company goes through the ritual. It's time to reappraise appraisal systems. Appraisal systems require constant rejuvenation and renewal. If appraisal systems have to serve developmental purposes without creating any insecurity or defensiveness we need to learn to treat employees with a shade more dignity. Despite widespread attention and resources performance appraisals remain an area with which few managers or employees are satisfied. Is it, that we don't have a good enough system yet or is there an intrinsic problem with performance appraisals, or is it just human nature to dislike or disagree with systems that we already have? This paper aims to make appraisals work for you and addresses issues relating to performance planning, evaluation, feedback and counseling and how to use it as a developmental tool to build culture.*

**"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new landscapes but in having new eyes." ----Marcel Proust**

**"Major component of the emerging HR agendas is creation of the cultural mindset."----Wayne Brockbank**

Each year people get into the ritual of form filling and most often they are not happy and wish to quit or present themselves as demotivated and appear cynical about the entire exercise. The question is, when there is so much of cynicism and unhappiness over the whole issue why have it at all? But without it or in its absence it is difficult to get the work done by people. This is one mechanism by which managers get work done by their subordinates and can control them. Thus bosses strive to get better ratings on their own performance by assessing the performance of their subordinates and thus control their behaviour. The subordinates usually complain that their bosses try and assess their behaviour without knowing the constraints under which they work. The author in her experience of conducting research and training in this area has found that satisfaction with current appraisal systems in industry is as low as 46% across all industries. This is due to attributes such as potential and performance are not being taken into account during the appraisal process and much importance is given to mathematical judgments of a person's contribution.

The common statements made by most subordinates are: 'what gets measured gets done' & "The means to an end is as important as end itself" but, how many of us experience this in organization. The component 'how' is important and this can only be improved through communication. If people are most important aspects – as the cliché goes –it is important to improve corporate performance by motivating them to put in their best efforts. This means rewarding and recognizing their contributions in a way that is meaningful to them and ensuring that rewards and recognition together results in higher returns on (human) investment. The best way to achieve both objectives – rewards & ROI – is to have the right metrics in place to measure employee performance. There is some merit in most appraisal systems, but almost all of them appear to be equally flawed. (Majumdar and Tarun Narayan)

To the HR chief in large organization, the right question to ask may not be which system is the best, but which one can be tweaked easily to suit his company's need. What works for one, may not work for the other context. According to Guido M J De Koning consultant with The Gallup Organization, if there is any form of appraisal that needs to be dumped as soon as possible, it is manager's evaluations or the traditional performance review conducted by an employee's boss. Manager's ratings are inherently subjective and this subjectivity only increases when the appraisals are linked to financial incentives such as merit pay raises.

HR consultants operating in the Indian circuit also see the wisdom of keeping annual increment issues separate from appraisals while pay obviously ought to be linked to performance, mixing the two in one session often messes things up. As one consultant told Indian Management "money clouds the open dialogue between a manager and an employee. While manager may focus on performance, employees may focus on how much money this is going to mean for him or her?"

Douglas McGregor says in Harvard Business review classic- 'An uneasy look at Performance Appraisal', states that 'Managers are uncomfortable when they are put in the position of playing god. They do not want to pass judgment on the personal worth of their team members. We all want to be nice guys at the end of the day and take refuge in the extensive from filling exercise'. Each company needs to; first of all, ask itself what it wants from the performance appraisal system.

The next question is: How can one reduce the subjective element of appraisal system? Appraisal is a tool to build culture (openness & transparency). Appraisal systems fail if goals & performance metrics are often not clearly



defined. At LG, the appraisal system has three parameters – performance, attitude and knowledge. At Tata Teleservices Appraisal System and its fairness showed 80% in 2001, 90% in 2003. Linkage between Appraisal and Rewards: 81% and 84%

According to Rogers 1995, "Performance management is a joint process that involves both the supervisor and the employee, who identify common goals, which correlate to the higher goals of the institution. Reward aims to enhance job performance, to retain valuable employees and develop the corporate unit. Intrinsic rewards create a sense of security, lead completion of some process and allow the individual to use a variety of developed skills and abilities. On the other hand, the external purpose of the reward system is to attract a large number of laborers who are skilled and proficient in their respective jobs. This reward includes money, fringe benefits, profit sharing incentive plans, professional and peer organization promotions, supervisor and compensation reward system, should therefore, be considered as an aid to better performance, which may be integrated with the overall business plan and strategy.

However, performance motivation depends on the situation, how it is perceived and the need of people. The connection between performance and rewards must be visible, and a climate of trust and credibility must exist in the organization. The belief that performance will lead to rewards is essentially a prediction about the future. The reward systems in hierarchical organization act as a strong motivation to learn those skills that are perceived to lead to promotion. If the reward system is objective, transparent and communicated properly it can also contribute to the overall culture and climate in the organization. Depending on how reward systems are developed, administered and managed, they may cause the culture of an organization to a large extent. The reward system should be designed to promote the kind of performance needed by an organization.

The system should support the behaviors expected of the employees. Therefore, it must communicate the type of behaviors to be rewarded and the way in which it will be rewarded. The reward system should be strengthened through re-organization of work process and enlarged job responsibilities, communications and participatory system. Employees should also be consulted in the formation of the plan.

In recent years, performance linked reward management system is seen as a holistic approach to a manager's function. It is not only a random collection of activities which are cyclical and sequential, but also important for accomplishment of work & source for high performance and excellence. Varda Pendse, Director, Cerebrus Consultants prefers a performance 'management' system and says appraisals have become common tools to give increments rather than tools to build a culture (of openness, transparency etc.) Also appraisals do not capture the extent of coaching and support that the manager has given to the employee. Another flaw in most systems is that giving feedback on employee performance becomes a one-time event. Giving feedback should be a continuous process in companies and should not be relegated only to the year end. As said previously appraisal systems also fail as goals and performance metrics are often not clearly defined. If goals are not aligned to all the departments and functions of an organization, this will result in lack of ownership of crucial goals across departments. Companies in such situations would not have information on its people for assigning more challenging tasks and new businesses. The next set of questions pertain to what are the common sets of weaknesses on which employees have to be trained? How to improve the performance of under performers? Most employees in companies want performance driven culture but are not willing to accept lower pay for lower performance.

### **Purpose of Performance Appraisal**

Most people feel that appraisal is only a means to give increments and not a tool for development or culture building or a means to help individual build his career path in the organization. But performance appraisal has many facets. It is an exercise in observation and judgment, it is a feedback process, and it is an organizational intervention. As a measurement process it is an intense emotional process. Not surprisingly, it is seen as effective in less than 10% of the organizations that use it. In view of such widespread dissatisfaction, why do appraisals continue to be used? What purposes do they serve? Appraisals serves a twofold purpose: (1) to improve employees' work performance by helping them realize and use their full potential in carrying out their firms' missions and (2) to provide information to employees and managers for use in making work related decisions. More specifically, appraisals serve the following purposes:

- Appraisals provide legal and formal organizational justification for employment decisions to promote outstanding performers
- Appraisals are used as criteria to test validation i.e., to test that performance influence appraisal results.
- Appraisals provide feedback to individual for career development.
- Appraisals help in identifying training needs and also establishes objectives for training programs.
- Appraisals help diagnose organizational problems by identifying training needs and by identifying effective and ineffective performers.



## Performance Management System

The operation may have succeeded, but the patient died.- By anonymous

Most performance management systems are significantly flawed and don't deliver the results executives seek. When analyzing the various practices-both effective and non-effective- start by looking at three distinct components of any performance management system. The first component captures, quantify, measure or evaluate an employee's performance? Second how is that performance rewarded? Is there a link between performance and rewards? Finally what is company's employee development approach? How are employees being developed and supported to deliver superior performance? All these have impact on the culture of the organization. Performance management is about creating a system that provides employees with organizational direction and priorities, makes them aware of their current performance levels, supports them through training and coaching and rewards those who demonstrate high performance. It is like a compass; one that indicates a person's actual direction as well as person's desired direction. It requires willingness and a commitment to focus on improving performance at the level of the individual or team every day.

The broad process of performance management requires the following:

- **Direction:** Clarity of vision, strategy and objectives. This provides focus and channels efforts in the right direction.
- **Awareness:** is to improve performance. Feedback to include appreciation and suggestions for improvement. Feedback should motivate the employee to perform better.
- **Support:** Employees need support to work on their improvement areas. Organizations should provide training, coaching to improve their performance
- **Rewards:** Positive reinforcement is given through rewards and recognition for employees.

Today, there are two philosophies regarding how to appraise employee performance. One is the 'get tough' approach pursued by firms like IBM, GE and Ford under Jacques Nasser. Employers here view it as an integral part of the firm's performance management efforts: They use the appraisal process as one way to improve the firm's performance. This approach is typified by Andrall Pearson, CEO of Tricon Global Restaurants, who"... recommends sorting your population into four groups, ranging from poor to superior, and then asking for a specific plan for the people in each group. Always focus first on the bottom group; rooting out the poorest performers will foster a climate of continual improvement. If everyone in the bottom quartile is replaced, the third quartile becomes the new bottom group and the focus of subsequent improvement efforts. In fact, former General Electric CEO Jack Welch noted an important caution against implementing a forced distribution into any company: "I wouldn't want to inject a vitality curve [i.e., a forced distribution] cold turkey into an organization without a performance culture already in place. Differentiation is hard stuff. Our curve works because we spent over a decade with candour and openness at every level".

## Performance Reviews

The performance review meeting is the basis for assessing the three key elements of performance ('the three Cs') namely; contribution, competence and continuous development. It gives managers with their teams and the individual members of their staff the opportunity to pause after the hurly-burly of everyday life and reflect on the key issue of personal development and performance improvement. It is a means of ensuring the two-way communication on issues concerning work can take place, and it provides the basis for future work and development plans. In reality in most organizations the managers are giving reviews based on their performance which is already over but they are trying to buy the employee loyalty for the next year, the logic being what gets reinforced or acknowledged gets done. The Adam's equity theory holds very true in Indian context. We are also not very comfortable in giving negative feedback because we feel that if we cannot say anything good at least let's not say anything negative. We are also not comfortable giving feedback to a colleague who is senior to us.

## Objectives of PA

- **Motivation:** To encourage people to improve their performance and develop their skills.
- **Development:** To provide a basis for developing and broadening attributes and competencies relevant both to the current role and any future role the employee may have the potential to carry out.
- **Communication:** To serve as a two-way channel for communication about roles, objectives, relationships, work problems and aspirations.



## **Performance counseling**

Performance counseling can be defined as the help provided by a manager to his subordinates in analyzing their performance and related job behaviors in order to increase their job effectiveness. Performance counseling focuses on the entire performance (tasks and behaviors) during a particular period rather than on a specific problem. The counselor has an additional task of motivating the counselee to participate effectively in the counseling process. He should generate a climate of acceptance, mutuality, trust and openness during counseling. It should be done at least once in a year as integral part of the appraisal system but it could be carried out more frequently by managers.

What constitutes counseling? There are three main processes involved in counseling – Communication, influencing, and helping.

1. **Communication:** Involves both receiving messages (listening) giving messages and giving feedback. Counselors do all three things.
2. Counseling also involves influencing the counselee in several ways.
3. This influence enables the person to exercise more autonomy, positive reinforcement so that desirable behaviour is further strengthened.

In JK Corporation Ltd. The Lakshmi Cement division, performance counseling is done annually for every employee to ensure improvement in performance. During the mid-year review developmental counseling is done for every appraisee. Strengths and weaknesses identified have to be supported with examples during the last one year. Thus appraiser cannot just list it without giving any thought. Interpersonal feedback is an important input for increasing self-awareness. It helps in reducing the blind area of a person, helping him to become more aware about his strengths and weaknesses. If properly used, it results in higher mutuality between two persons. Feedback will be effective if the person who gives the feedback ( counsellor ) makes sure that it is:

1. Descriptive and not evaluative, focused on the behaviour of the person and not on the person himself
2. Data based and specific and not impressionistic
3. Reinforces positive new behaviour
4. Suggestive and not prescriptive
5. Continuous
6. Mostly personal, giving data from one's own experience
7. Need-based and solicited
8. Intended to help
9. Focused on modifiable behaviour
10. Satisfies needs of both the feedback given and one who receives feedback.
11. Checked and verified
12. Well timed; and
13. Contributes to mutuality and building up relationship

There are some organizations which also go for performance audit to check the efficiency, effectiveness and compliance of the entire Performance management system. If the dissatisfaction level is less than 70 percent then necessary changes are brought about.

## **Conclusion**

While Performance management has become more and more sophisticated in recent decades, every system has its own limitations. There is no perfect system that can be adopted without modifications in any company. There is some merit in most appraisal systems but which one can be used easily to suit your organization is most important. Always benchmark the best practice but take the best fit. If used properly it can work as a powerful tool for building culture and help reduce attrition to a large extent.



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## **International Journal of Strengths Based Practice, Training & Research**

An electronic journal dedicated to providing an international voice to practitioners, educators, and researchers focused on the strengths-based perspective and post-modernist constructs

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This electronic journal is dedicated to providing a forum for international cooperation and collaboration in support of strengths-based practices. All who have and will contribute to the success of this journal are concerned about how those that serve others have focused on pathology and defects rather than what the person or community is doing to make it in this world, not without pain and difficulties, with their strengths and resiliency in the face of challenges. We are focused on bringing a forum for strengths and resiliency practice based research, training and knowledge to practitioners and researchers around the world who are interested in finding alternative ways of collaborating and consulting with a wide range of people and communities within a wide range of settings. The journal is eliciting materials for publication to include:

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- practitioner reflections & commentary on their own strengths based practice

**The journal is requesting submissions for publication in the inaugural edition to be published in the FALL of 2007.**

**Submissions should be received NO LATER THAN MAY 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007**

**Please send all submissions to**

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**Author guidelines and content overview on reverse side**

### **Author Guidelines and Content Overview**

The *International Journal of Strengths Based Practice, Training and Research* is a new forum for practitioners, educators and researchers working in a broad range of human service and educational settings focused on strengthening individuals, couples, groups, and communities. Authors should emphasize the post-modernist strengths-based and resiliency-based content as the foundation of the work they are discussing and or describing in their manuscript.

**Manuscript Guidelines: There are several formats that authors may choose to use.**

**Practitioner Reflections & Commentary:** These articles are intended to provide a forum for practitioners to contribute their practice experiences and wisdom to the body of knowledge. Practitioners are encouraged to write descriptive or evaluative articles that share their strengths-based practice experiences and outcomes. This can also include difficulties and problems faced by the practitioner in attempting to implement strengths-based and resiliency based practices, unique and informative case presentations, descriptions of agency level strengths-based initiatives in human service, judicial, educational settings and any other creative knowledge building for strengths-based practice and learning. They can reflect work in a wide range of settings such as mental health, medical, aging, community, schools, and so on. These articles should be from **5 to 20** pages, double-spaced, excluding references [if used] and any accompanying figures or tables [if used]. E-mail the manuscript as an attachment to the Journal. The first page should include the title of the manuscript and the name, title and affiliation of each author. The second page should include the title of the manuscript and a short abstract [limit 150 words]. The third page should be the start of the main body of the manuscript; this page and the following pages should not include an



indication of the authorship. The e-mail with the attachment should identify the corresponding author with contact information, including mail and email address, also phone number.

**Conceptual Article:** These articles are intended to represent the typical informative articles that explore new ideas or old ideas in new and informative ways. They can range from practice focused to theoretical thought pieces that provoke, stimulate, and inform the reader about the post-modern constructs, strengths perspective and or resiliency perspective and its representation in practice models such as solution-focused, motivational, narrative, client-directed and similar manifestations of the paradigm. They can reflect work in a wide range of settings such as mental health, medical, aging, community, schools, and so on.

**Research Article:** These articles should have as their main focus research on strengths and resiliency based practice. The intention of these articles is to provide a knowledge base of articles looking at practice based evidence and larger cohort studies of the strengths-based practice and models of practice. It is important that these articles give specific descriptions of the practice implementation and the fidelity assurance in the study.

**Practice and Training Articles:** These articles should describe and demonstrate strengths/resiliency based practice that the authors believe to be unique and/or add significant knowledge to the available literature on strengths-based/resiliency-based approaches with specific groups, settings, cultures, socioeconomic conditions, geographic and other unique contexts.

**Guidelines:** These articles should be from **15 to 25** pages, double-spaced, excluding references and any accompanying figures or tables. E-mail the manuscript as an attachment to the Journal. The first page should include the title of the manuscript and the name, title and affiliation of each author. The second page should include the title of the manuscript and a short abstract [limit 150 words]. The third page should be the start of the main body of the manuscript; this page and the following pages should not include an indication of the authorship. The e-mail with the attachment should identify the corresponding author with contact information, including mail, email address, and phone number

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**Dedicated to the work and creativity of  
Howard Goldstein and Steve de Shazer  
and their contributions to the human family**

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The Brisbane Institute of Strengths based Practices and Indian-based NGO Sanghamitra are pleased to present this compendium of papers and presentations of the inaugural International Conference Strengths Based Practice that Works with Individuals, Groups and Communities convened at Hyderabad, India from 10-12 November 2006.

The conference brought in a number of people who believe in promoting better forms of societal development, and building resilience, and working with strengths as opposed to simply meeting deficits.

A part of their collective wisdom is captured in this volume.

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